



Key Trends in Special Education in Charter Schools:

A Secondary
Analysis of the
Civil Rights
Data Collection

February 2018

Lauren Morando Rhim
and Shaini Kothari



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National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools



The National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) is an independent, non-profit organization formed in 2013 to fill a void that has existed since the inception of the charter school movement in the United States, namely a coordinated effort to address the challenges associated with providing access and quality supports and services to students with disabilities in charter schools.

At NCSECS, our goal is to advocate for students with diverse learning needs to ensure that if they are interested in attending charter schools, they are able to access and thrive in schools designed to enable all students to succeed. We strive to achieve our goal by proactively working with state education agencies, charter school authorizers, charter management organizations, and individual charter schools as well as charter school and special education advocates and other stakeholders.

National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools

Vision

The charter school sector will fully embrace its responsibilities to meet the needs of all students and serve as a model of innovative and exemplary programs for students with diverse learning needs.

Mission

To ensure that students with diverse learning needs are able to fully access and thrive in charter schools making meaningful investments in innovation.

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Acknowledgments

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Preface

The National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) is an independent, non-profit organization committed to proactively ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to charter schools and to fostering innovations that will benefit students with disabilities in both charter and traditional public schools. To fulfill its mission, NCSECS focuses on four key areas:

- Establishing and Communicating Facts
- Informing Policy
- Building Diverse Coalitions of Stakeholders
- Building Charter School Capacity to Educate Students with Disabilities

This report builds on our 2015 analysis of the 2011–2012 Civil Rights Data Collection and represents a key element of our effort to ***establish and communicate the facts*** about special education in charter schools. The 2015 report established a baseline of data regarding the extent to which charter schools serve students with disabilities. This, the second of such analyses, examines the status of students with disabilities in charter schools compared to traditional public schools according to enrollment, service provision, and discipline as well as the prevalence and focus of specialized charter schools. In conducting the respective analyses, our goal is to provide federal and state policy makers as well as practitioners and researchers with a solid foundation for a more productive examination of the issues in an effort to drive changes that could discernibly benefit students with disabilities.

This report reflects our deep commitment to using data to inform both policy and practice to ensure equity for students with a range of disabilities in the growing charter sector.



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Contents

Executive Summary	2	Discussion	22
Policy Recommendations	4	Policy Recommendations	23
Federal Level	4	Federal Level	23
State Level	5	State Level	23
Local Level	5	Local Level	24
Introduction	6	Charter Schools	24
Civil Rights Data Collection	7	Charter School Authorizers	24
Overall Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in Charter and Traditional Public Schools	8	Charter Support Organizations	24
National Trends	8	Private Philanthropy	24
Enrollment Variance by State	9	Appendix A: Methodology	25
Enrollment Variance within States	9	Overall Enrollment of Students with Disabilities	25
Enrollment Variance by Charter School Legal Status	12	Determining LEA Status	25
Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in Charter and Traditional Public Schools by Disability Category and Educational Placement ...	14	Enrollment by Disability Category and Educational Placement	26
Enrollment by Disability Category	14	Discipline of Students	26
Education Environment	15	Specialized Charter Schools	26
Discipline of Students in Charter and Traditional Public Schools	16	Appendix B: Box-and-Whisker Plot for within State Variance	27
Specialized Charter Schools	20	Interpreting Box-and-Whisker Plot	28
Overall Enrollment at Specialized Charter Schools	20	Indicator of Spread	28
Enrollment by Disability Type at Specialized Charter Schools	20	Indicator of Symmetry	28
Specialized Charter School Locations by State ...	21	Interpretation	28
		Appendix C: Specialized Charter Schools by Specialization	29

Executive Summary



As the charter sector grows and evolves, information regarding these autonomous public schools of choice evolves as well. Prior to 2015, only a handful of reports included information about the status of students with disabilities in charter schools. In fall 2015, NCSECS published a report that analyzed the data from the 2011–2012 U.S. Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). We examined key public school data and made state-by-state comparisons of critical indicators impacting the status of students with disabilities in charter schools compared to traditional public schools (see Table 1 for a summary of these findings). This report builds on the previous one by providing updates on the same key indicators and introduces additional information on enrollment by disability type and charter

school legal status using the 2013–2014 CRDC report, the most recent data published by the Office for Civil Rights. This report also builds on the existing list of specialized charter schools identified in the last report.

Overall, our analysis of the 2013–2014 CRDC data shows similar patterns to those seen in the 2011–2012 CRDC data. Highlights of key questions and the findings and recommendations for state and federal policy makers are as follows:

Enrollment: What proportion of students enrolled in traditional and charter schools have a disability that qualifies them for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)?

- The national average of enrollment of students eligible for special education under both IDEA and Section 504 across *all public schools* in the 2013–14 academic year was 12.52% compared to 12.47% in 2011–12.
- On average in states with charter laws, students who qualify for services under IDEA made up 10.62% of total enrollment in charter schools and 12.46% of total enrollment in traditional public schools (i.e., non-charter public schools). This is similar to the enrollment in 2011–12 at 10.42% for charter schools and 12.55% in traditional public schools.
- Students who qualify for Section 504 support made up 1.84% of all students at traditional public schools and 1.92% of all students in charter schools. This is slightly higher than seen in 2011–12 at 1.52% for charter schools and 1.53% for traditional public schools.
- When disaggregated by legal status (i.e., charter schools operating as their own local education agency [LEA] or as part of an existing LEA), charter schools that operate as their own LEA enroll more students with disabilities, 11.5%, than charter schools that operate as part of an LEA, 9.74%.

Table 1. Snapshot Comparisons 2011–2012 Compared to 2013–2014

Data Point	Traditional Public Schools		Charter Schools	
	2011–2012	2013–2014	2011–2012	2013–2014
Enrollment of students with disabilities (K–12)	12.55%	12.46%	10.42%	10.62%
Enrollment of students with disabilities according to legal status of charter schools	N/A	N/A	Part of an LEA	LEA
			9.74%	11.5%
Placement of students with disabilities in general education >80% of the day	66.85%	68.09%	84.11%	84.27%
Suspension of students with disabilities	13.40%	11.56%	13.45%	12.28%
Expulsion of students with disabilities	0.46%	0.26%	0.55%	0.20%
Number of Specialized Charter Schools	N/A	N/A	115	137

Enrollment by Disability Type: What is the profile of the students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools?

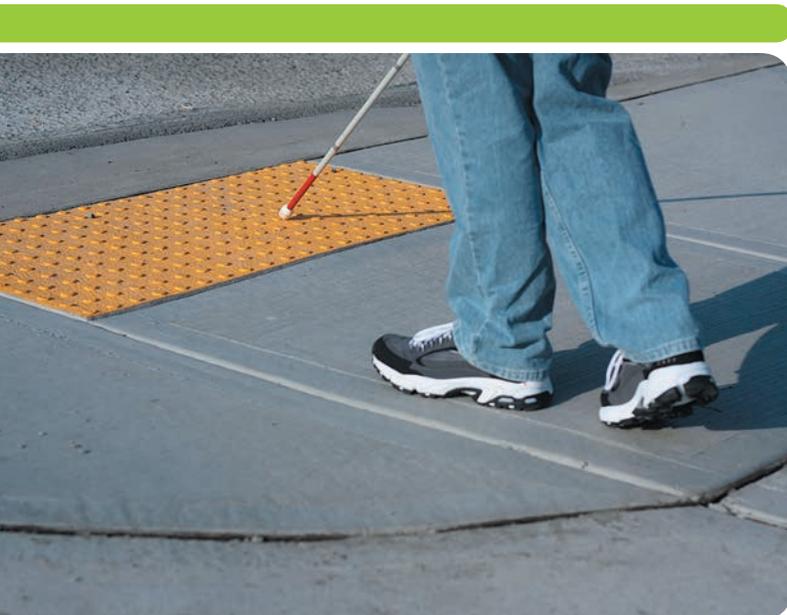
- Charter schools report higher percentages of enrollment of students with specific learning disabilities—the largest category of students with disabilities served under IDEA (49.49% vs. 45.98%), autism (7.2% vs. 6.53%), and emotional disturbance (5.06% vs. 4.10%) compared to traditional public schools.
- Conversely, charter schools report lower percentages of enrollment of students with developmental delays (0.92% vs. 2.07%) and intellectual impairments (3.64% vs. 5.89%) compared to traditional public schools.
- Charter schools and traditional public schools serve roughly the same proportion of students who have speech or language impairments, other health impairments, and other types of disabilities (e.g., multiple disabilities, hearing or visually impaired, and traumatic brain injury).
- Within charter schools, those that are part of an LEA enroll a notably larger percentage of students with speech or language impairments compared to charters that are their own LEA (21.37% vs. 17.85%).
- Conversely, within charter schools, those that operate as their own LEA enroll a notably larger percentage of students with emotional disturbance (6.15% vs. 3.10%).

Placement: Where do students with disabilities spend their day?

- Charter schools serve relatively more students with disabilities in more inclusive settings (i.e., 80% or more of the day in the general education classroom) than do traditional public schools and relatively fewer students with disabilities in less inclusive settings (i.e., 79% or less of the day in the general education classroom).
- 84.27% of students with disabilities in charter schools were educated in the general education classroom for 80% or more of the day compared to 68.09% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools. This is similar to that observed in 2011–12 at 84.11% for charter schools and 66.85% for traditional public schools.
- 8.67% of students with disabilities in charter schools were in the general education classroom between 40% and 79% of the day compared to 18.53% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools. This is slightly lower than that observed in 2011–12 at 9.60% for charter schools and 19.46% for traditional public schools.
- 5.08% of students with disabilities in charter schools were in the general education classroom for 39% or less of the day compared to 11.78% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools. This is comparable to that observed in 2011–12 at 4.49% for charter schools and 11.67% for traditional public schools.

Suspensions and Expulsions: What percentage of the student population has been suspended or expelled from school?

- Charter schools *suspend* a greater proportion of students overall, but in terms of suspension rates for students with disabilities, charter schools and traditional public schools are somewhat similar.
- In terms of the overall student population, charter schools suspend a greater proportion of students than do traditional public schools (6.61% vs. 5.64%). This is slightly lower than observed in 2011–12 at 7.40% for charter schools and 6.88% for traditional public schools.
- Charter schools and traditional public schools suspend students with disabilities at a rate approximately twice as high as the average suspension rate for all students (12.28% in charter schools and 11.56% in traditional public schools). This is lower than observed in 2011–12, where charter schools suspended 13.45% students with disabilities and traditional public schools suspended 13.40% students with disabilities.



- Both charters and traditional public schools *expel* students with disabilities at a rate higher than students without disabilities, but charter schools expel students with disabilities *at a lower rate* than traditional public schools do.
- The expulsion rates for students with disabilities vs. students without disabilities were 0.39% vs. 0.18% for charter schools and 0.51% vs. 0.23% for traditional public schools. This is lower than the data seen in 2011–12 at 0.55% vs. 0.25% for charter schools and 0.46% vs. 0.23% for traditional public schools.

Specialized Charter Schools: How prevalent are specialized charter schools? NCSECS verified the existence of 137 charter schools that focused primarily or entirely on students with disabilities. Of these 137 schools, 127 had enrollment data available within the CRDC.

- About 64.96% of specialized charter schools served students with a variety of disabilities, as opposed to a single disability type or a specific focus on two or more disabilities.
- There were 47 schools that specialized in a single disability category (e.g., autism or deaf-blindness).
- Enrollment trends at specialized charter schools indicate much higher proportions of students with disabilities—65.24% on average—compared to the national average of 12.52%.
- As documented in our 2015 report (Rhim, Gumz & Henderson), the majority of specialized charter schools remain clustered in the states of Florida, Ohio, and Texas.

Policy Recommendations

Our secondary analysis of the 2013–2014 CRDC updates our understanding of the status of students with disabilities in the charter sector established by our analysis of the 2011–2012 data and begins to establish trend lines regarding the extent to which students with disabilities are accessing and being served in charter schools across the country. Charter schools are enrolling and serving students with disabilities, but there are differences between traditional public schools and charter schools in terms of the representation of students with disabilities both in terms of proportion and profile. However, over time, the enrollment differences between the two sectors is continuing to decrease. There is notable variability across and within states that should be tracked in the interest of ensuring students with disabilities having equitable access to charter schools. Based on our secondary analyses of the data and ongoing work advocating for students with disabilities to ensure they are able to access and thrive in charter schools, we propose the following recommendations for federal, state, and local policy makers and practitioners. If implemented, we propose these actions will ensure equitable access and catalyze development and adoption of innovative strategies that will benefit students with disabilities.

Federal Level

- Continue collection and analysis of large-scale datasets (e.g., the CRDC) by the USED to inform critical policies and related regulations and guidance.
- Maintain and strengthen guidance provided by USED to charter school authorizers and operators to ensure compliance with policies outlined in the ADA, IDEA, and Section 504.
- Prioritize and sustain investments that build charter school capacity to serve students with diverse learning needs (e.g., Charter School Program National Leadership Activities grants and carve outs of State Education Agency grants for technical assistance to charter schools).

State Level

- Ensure key state offices, such as the chief state school officer, state director of special education, and state charter school officers, collaborate with one another and charter school authorizers to articulate clear policies and accountability frameworks associated with upholding civil rights statutes such as ADA, IDEA, and Section 504.
- Require that relevant state agency divisions conduct periodic reviews of state policies and authorizing practices—especially when there are notable differences in enrollment of students with disabilities in traditional and charter schools—to ensure that any differences are not due to discriminatory policies and practices.

Local Level

Charter Schools

- Allocate adequate resources to support provision of supports and services to students with disabilities (e.g., traditional public schools generally allocate 20–25% of their budget to special education¹).
- Build capacity of general and special education teachers regarding identifying and providing appropriate special education and related services to students with a diverse range of disabilities.
- Communicate explicit commitment to serving students with disabilities in promotional materials and ensure staff who interact with parents are knowledgeable about the school’s responsibility to provide a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Charter School Authorizers

- Provide school leaders and both general and special education teachers with professional learning and technical assistance to support students with diverse learning needs.
- Track the accessibility, safety, and performance of all students to ensure that students with disabilities are afforded the same opportunities in charter schools as all other students.

Charter Support Organizations

- Embed robust content (i.e., more than basic compliance 101) regarding educating students with disabilities into application support materials and incubation efforts for new and turnaround schools.
- Provide resources and tools to assist charter schools to understand their responsibilities related to students with disabilities and build and sustain capacity to provide quality services and supports.
- Foster relationships between charter schools and existing special education support structures (e.g., intermediate education agencies) to ensure charter schools are accessing all available resources.

Private Philanthropy

- Leverage the grantmaking process to drive access and outcomes for students with disabilities by tracking metrics (e.g., enrollment and academic growth) related to serving students with disabilities.
- Identify grant metrics that reward schools that demonstrate growth for all students as opposed to absolute performance, which can serve as a disincentive to serve students with disabilities.
- Offer financial incentives to charter schools to develop or adopt innovative programs that benefit students with disabilities.



¹ <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/SEEP1-What-Are-We-Spending-On.pdf>.

Introduction



The extent to which charter schools welcome and serve students with a diverse array of disabilities is a point of ongoing discussion and concern on the part of key stakeholders, such as parents, advocates, policy makers, and philanthropists. Driving the discussion are fundamental questions about the degree to which charter schools are fulfilling their responsibilities outlined under federal laws, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), to not only enroll but to provide quality supports and services to students who require special education and related services.

To continue to track the evolving landscape in both charter and traditional public schools, the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) followed up its examination of the 2011–2012 release of the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) of the U.S. Department of Education (USED) and analyzed the 2013–2014 release. The CRDC provides the field with access to data regarding key variables of interest (e.g., enrollment, educational placement, and discipline rates). This report builds on our findings from our initial analyses of enrollment data in traditional public schools and in charter schools across the nation during the 2011–2012 school year. For details regarding the methodology behind the analysis, see Appendix A.





Civil Rights Data Collection

The CRDC is a large dataset compiled by the USED's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). As described by the USED: The purpose of the CRDC (formerly the Elementary and Secondary School Survey) is "to collect data on key education and civil rights issues in our nation's public schools. The CRDC survey collects a variety of information, including but not limited to student enrollment and educational programs and services, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, limited English proficiency, and disability."¹

The CRDC survey is administered every other school year and collects data from the universe of public schools in the U.S. (rather than a sample of schools). Released to the public in the summer of 2016, the 2013-14 CRDC provides the most recent and comprehensive dataset regarding the U.S. public education system to date. For the 2013-14 collection, the response rate was 99.2% for school districts.² It included 96,196 public schools from across the nation of which 6,129 were charter schools (see Table 2 for the population of schools included in CRDC and Appendix A for more information on CRDC).³

Table 2. Overview of Schools in CRDC 2013-2014

School Type	Number of Schools, by Type	Percent of Schools, by Type
Traditional Public Schools (Includes non-charter, alternative, special education, and magnet schools)	79,603	83.3%
Charter	6,129	6.4%
Alternative	4,519	4.7%
Magnet	3,749	3.9%
Special Education	2,196	2.3%
Total*	96,196	100.6%*

* Total number of schools and total percent of schools by type is greater than the number of schools in the CRDC because school types are not mutually exclusive.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. 2013-2014 *Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf> (accessed July 31, 2017).

² U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (personal communication (e-mail), June 10, 2015).

³ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. 2013-2014 *Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf> (accessed July 31, 2017).



Overall Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in Charter and Traditional Public Schools



National Trends

The CRDC 2013–2014 survey documents that charter schools educate a smaller proportion of students with disabilities¹ than traditional public schools^{2, 3} (Figure 1). However, the difference is decreasing (Figure 2). Since 2009, the proportion of students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools has increased incrementally, whereas the proportion of students in traditional public schools has remained relatively constant. Given that the CRDC reflects nearly the universe of both types of schools, any difference would be considered statistically significant and support concerns that students with disabilities are not accessing charter schools as readily as traditional public schools.⁴ However, the decrease in the difference over time appears to indicate that as the charter sector grows and matures, the difference will continue to decrease as charter schools build capacity and more parents of students with disabilities seek to exercise choice.

- On average, in 2013–14 charter schools enrolled proportionally fewer students with disabilities than traditional public schools under IDEA (10.62% in charter schools vs. 12.46% in traditional public schools as shown in Figure 1).⁵

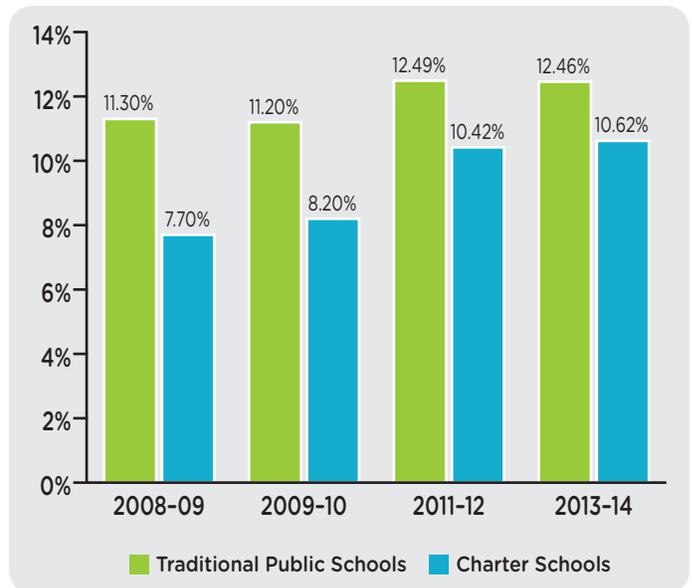


Figure 1. Proportion of Students with Disabilities

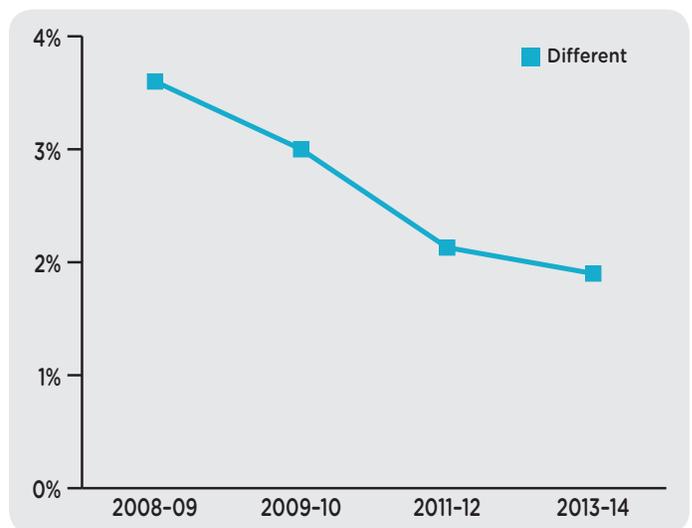


Figure 2. Difference in Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in Traditional Public vs. Charter Schools

Note: No national enrollment data analyzed or published for 2010–11.

¹ Unless noted, all data referencing students with disabilities include students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

² Data only compared for states that have charter school laws.

³ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *2013–2014 Civil Rights Data Collection*. Retrieved from https://ocrdata.ed.gov/StateNationalEstimations/Estimations_2013_14.

⁴ See footnotes in respective sections regarding statistical tests of significance.

⁵ Significantly different, with a p -value < 0.05 , $M = 21.45$, 95% CI [20.78, 22.13].

- The difference in enrollment of students with disabilities between traditional public schools and charter schools under IDEA has declined over the years⁶ (2.07% in 2011–12⁷ to 1.84% in 2013–14 as shown in Figure 2).⁸
- Students who qualify for Section 504 accommodations and modifications made up 1.84% of all students at traditional public schools and 1.92% of all students in charter schools.⁹

Enrollment Variance by State

The national enrollment averages represent an important data point given the persistent narrative questioning the extent to which charter schools are serving all students. However, masked in these data are notable overall enrollment variances between and within states as well as service provision and location (i.e., actual support provided and percentage of time in general education classrooms versus segregated settings) in both traditional and charter public schools. Referral to and identification of students as eligible to receive special education and related services under the IDEA involves multiple steps culminating in the convening of an Individual Education Program (IEP) team charged with developing an appropriate set of goals and services necessary to achieve the goals. While the process is heavily regulated, it includes notable discretion on the part of professionals and parents. Factors documented to influence identification are race, socioeconomic status, gender, and state policies and procedures.¹⁰ Within this broader context, we see variance in the percentage of students with disabilities in charter schools as well. With a few exceptions, it appears the broader state policy context that shapes identification in traditional public schools extends to charter schools.

- Maine enrolls the highest proportion of students with disabilities in both traditional (16.7%) and charter

(25.32%) schools, whereas Texas enrolls the lowest proportion of students with disabilities in both traditional (8.71%) and charter (7.14%) schools^{11, 12} followed by Idaho with comparably low traditional (9.46%) and charter school (8.1%) enrollments (see Figure 3).

- In four states, traditional public schools enroll at least five percent more students with disabilities than charter schools (i.e., Wyoming, Delaware, Missouri, and New Jersey).
- While in most states, charter schools enroll a smaller proportion of students with disabilities compared to traditional public schools, in 2013–14, the proportion of students with disabilities was greater in charter schools than traditional public schools in a handful of states with only a few charter schools in the 2013–14 CRDC dataset (i.e., Iowa, Maine, Virginia, and New Hampshire, as shown in Figure 4).¹³

Enrollment Variance within States

Notably, across the nation, in both types of schools, enrollment ranges from nearly 0% to 100% students with disabilities. That is, not all public schools in a given state serve the statewide average proportion and in fact, the average masks notable variances across the state within both sectors. In practice, traditional public schools frequently develop specialized programs within a larger school, school district, or wholly separate schools for students who require more significant support, and, consequently, schools that operate these programs may have a larger proportion of student with disabilities. Conversely, other schools may have a smaller proportion.¹⁴ In practice, much of the variability may stem from how districts cluster expertise and specialized programs.

⁶ 2008–09 and 2009–10 data collected from Government Accountability Office. (2012, June 2010). *Additional Federal Attention Needed to Help Protect Access for Students with Disabilities GAO-12-543*. Washington, DC: Retrieved July 31, 2015 from <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-543>.

⁷ Rhim, L. M., Gumz, J., & Henderson, K. (2015). *Key Trends in Special Education in Charter Schools: A Secondary Analysis of the Civil Rights Data Collection 2011–2012*. New York, NY: National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools.

⁸ Significantly different, with a p -value < 0.05 , $M = 7.87$, 95% CI [7.41, 8.33].

⁹ Significantly different, with a p -value < 0.05 , $M = 0.49$, 95% CI [0.24, 0.74].

¹⁰ See for example, Coutinho, M. J., & Oswald, D. P. (2004). *Disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education: Measuring the problem*. Practitioner Brief Series: National Center for Culturally Responsive Education Systems; Mahitivanichcha, K. & Parrish, T. The implications of fiscal incentives on identification rates and placement in special education: Formulas for influencing best practices. *Journal of Education Finance*, 31(1) (Summer 2005), pp. 1–22; U.S. Department of Education. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (2016, February). *Racial and ethnic disparities in special education: A multi-year disproportionality analysis by state, analysis category and race/ethnicity*. Washington, DC.

¹¹ AL, KY, MS, MT, ND, NE, SD, VT, WA, WV are not represented since they only had traditional public schools in the 2012–14 academic year. Please see table A7 in the detailed methodology on the NCSECS website: www.ncsecs.org/crdc-13-14-methodology. It contains the corresponding percentages for each state, along with the differences in percentages by state.

¹² The extremely low percentage of enrollment of students with disabilities in Texas can be attributed to the state policy to limit enrollment under IDEA in all schools in Texas to 8.5%. This was uncovered in 2016 by the *Houston Chronicle* reporter Brian Rosenthal in his 7-part series on special education in Texas called “Denied.” (Rosenthal, Brian. “Denied: How Texas Keeps Tens of Thousands of Children out of Special Education.” www.houstonchronicle.com/denied/)

¹³ The notable differences between traditional public schools and charter schools in the states of Iowa, Virginia, New Hampshire, and Maine are outliers due in large part to a notably small sample of charter schools ($n = 1, 2, 3$, and 3 , respectively) and a disproportionate percentage of students with disabilities in these schools.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 38th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2016, Washington, DC, 2016.

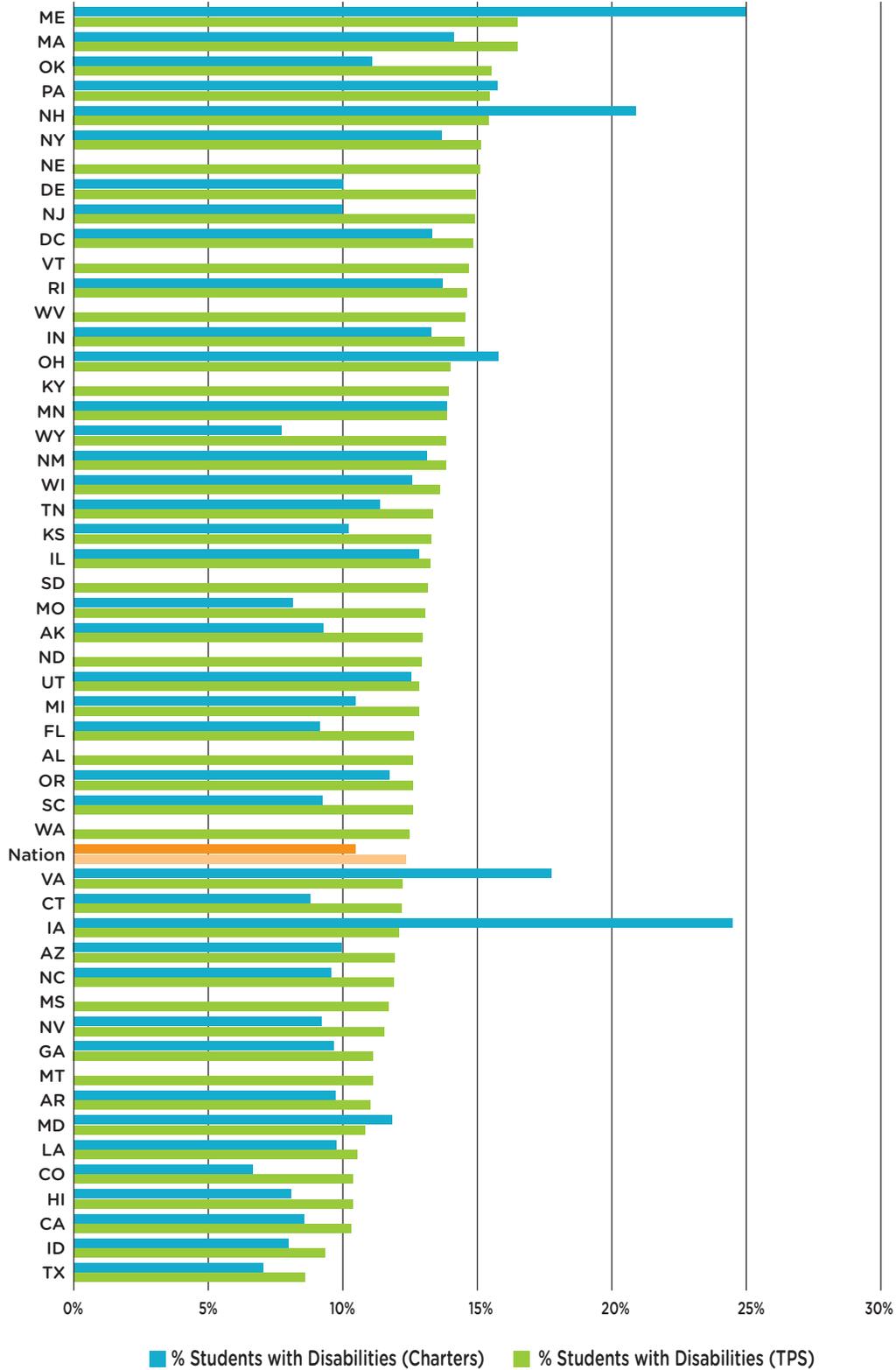


Figure 3. Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in 2013-14 by State and School Type

Note: The dark orange bar indicates national averages for students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools, and the light orange bar indicates national averages for students with disabilities enrolled in traditional public schools.

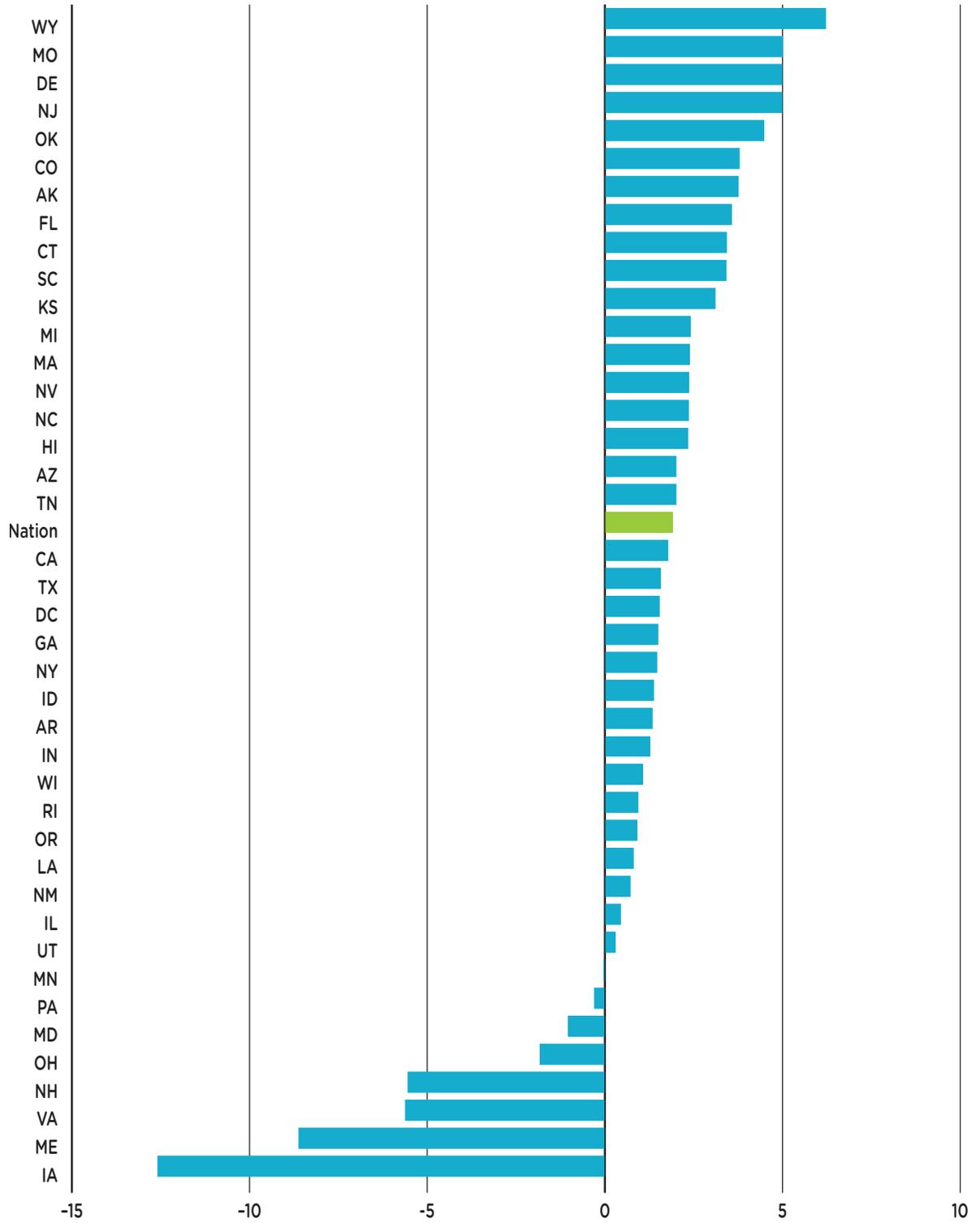


Figure 4. Difference in Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in Traditional Public vs. Charter Schools in 2013-14 by State

Note: The green bar indicates the average national difference in enrollment of students with disabilities in charter schools and traditional public schools.

For instance, according to USED, in 2014, only 16.9% of students with “intellectual disabilities” and 13.4% students with “multiple disabilities” were served in non-segregated educational placements (i.e., 80% or more of the day in a general education classroom).¹⁵ For additional details related to within state variance, see Appendix B.

- In general, charter schools show greater variance in enrollment percentages of students with disabilities compared to traditional public schools. Additionally, most charter schools tend to enroll fewer students who qualify for services under IDEA than traditional public schools.
- Almost half of the states with charter laws report a majority of their charter schools at higher-than-average IDEA enrollment among their charter schools, whereas the rest of the states with charter schools as well as all traditional public schools have a more even distribution of enrollment under IDEA among their schools.
- Almost all states with charter laws report a majority of their charter schools at higher-than-average Section 504 enrollment among their charter schools, whereas traditional public schools have a more even distribution of enrollment under Section 504 among their schools.

Enrollment Variance by Charter School Legal Status

State charter laws determine whether charter schools are local educational agencies (LEA) (i.e., districts) or part of an LEA, and this distinction appears to impact the enrollment of students with disabilities. Charters that operate as independent LEAs are wholly responsible for providing a full continuum of education placements for students with disabilities. Charter schools that operate as part of an LEA share the responsibility for provision of special education and related services with the larger LEA. In practice, when charter schools operate as part of an LEA, the LEA typically retains some state and federal funds and influences, to varying degrees, special education policies and practices. For instance, the LEA may participate in IEP team meetings and play a role in determining placements, which at times influences the number of students with disabilities enrolled in a charter that is part of an LEA.¹⁶

Reflecting these responsibilities associated with being an LEA (i.e., wholly responsible for providing a full continuum

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 38th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2016, Washington, DC, 2016.

¹⁶ Rhim, L., & O'Neill, P. T., (2013).

of special education and related services), these types of charter schools enroll more students with disabilities than their peers that operate as part of an LEA, perhaps because the option of placing the student in a traditional school within the district does not exist. In practice, LEAs that operate charter schools may be directing some students with disabilities, most notably students with more significant support needs, to existing LEA programs rather than creating or allocating resources to create new programs in new charter schools. These data raise questions regarding whether students with disabilities in locations where charter schools are part of the LEA are able to access charter schools on par with their peers without disabilities.

- Approximately 54% of the charter schools in the nation operate as autonomous LEAs (e.g., most charter schools in Massachusetts, Michigan, and North Carolina), while 46% operate as part of an LEA (e.g., most charter schools in California, Colorado, and Florida) (see Figure 5).¹⁷
- In general, charter schools that are their own LEA enroll a greater proportion of students with disabilities (11.5%) compared to charters that are part of an LEA (9.74%). However, this number is still lower than overall enrollment of students with disabilities in traditional public schools (12.46%)¹⁸ (Figure 6).



¹⁷ Legal status varies between and within states and even charter school authorizers. And, in some states, charter schools may be an LEA for some purposes (e.g., receipt of funds under Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act) but not others (e.g., receipt of funds under Part B of IDEA). Based on variables available from the 2013–14 Common Core of Data (CCD) Local Education Agency Universe file, we were able to identify the legal status of 4,871 of the 6,129 charter schools in our larger sample. In instances where charter schools may be hybrid in that they are LEAs for some purposes but not others, we deferred to how CCD categorized them.

¹⁸ Significance testing was not done for these numbers.

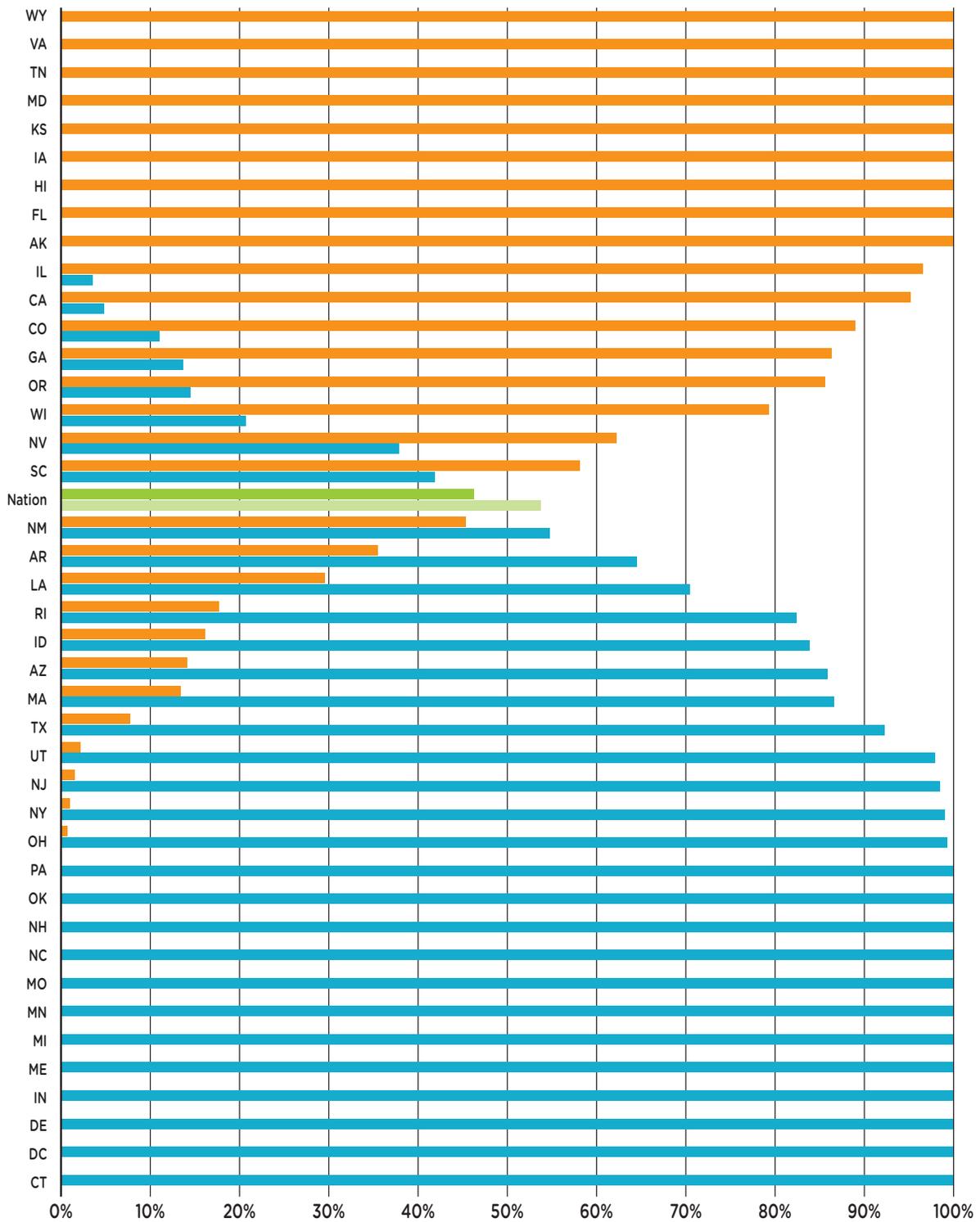


Figure 5. Charters by Legal Status

Note: The dark green line indicates national averages for charters that are autonomous LEAs, whereas the light green line indicates national averages for charters that are part of an LEA.

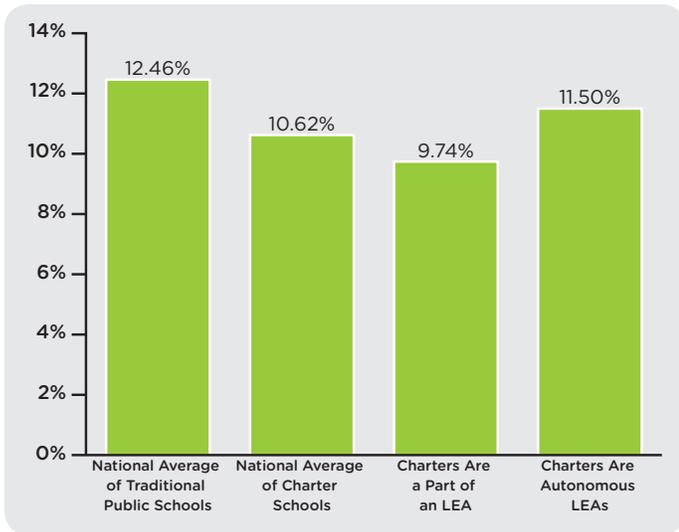


Figure 6. Percentages of Total Enrollment of Students with Disabilities by School Type and Charter Legal Status

Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in Charter and Traditional Public Schools by Disability Category and Educational Placement

Related to but distinct from questions regarding the extent to which students with disabilities are accessing charter schools are questions regarding the profile of these students in terms of their disability—and specifically, the extent of their support needs—and their educational placement.

Enrollment by Disability Category

While relatively imprecise given the individualized nature of IEPs, disability categories¹⁹ provide some insight into level of support, with diagnoses such as specific learning disability and speech and language impairment being the most prevalent and generally requiring the least amount of supports and services.

- Charter schools report a higher percentage of enrollment of students with specific learning disabilities—the largest category for students served under IDEA—(49.49% vs. 45.98%),²⁰ autism (7.2% vs. 6.53%),²¹ and emotional disturbance (5.06% vs. 4.10%)²² compared to traditional public schools (Figure 7).
- Conversely, charter schools serve fewer students with developmental delays²³ (0.92% vs. 2.07%)²⁴ and intellectual impairment (3.64% vs. 5.89%).²⁵
- Charter schools and traditional public schools serve similar proportions of students who have speech or language impairments, other health impairments, and

¹⁹ The 13 categories of disability according to IDEA are Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Deafness, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Speech or Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visual Impairment (including Blindness).

²⁰ Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 98.57, 95% CI [81.16, 115.98].

²¹ Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 2.18, 95% CI [1.44, 2.92].

²² Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 1.69, 95% CI [0.93, 2.44].

²³ Under IDEA, the decision on whether to use “developmental delay” for elementary-aged students versus other diagnoses such as autism or intellectual impairment is made at the discretion of both the state and the LEA, thus the difference may not be an accurate representation.

²⁴ Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 1.96, 95% CI [1.49, 2.43].

²⁵ Not statistically significant.

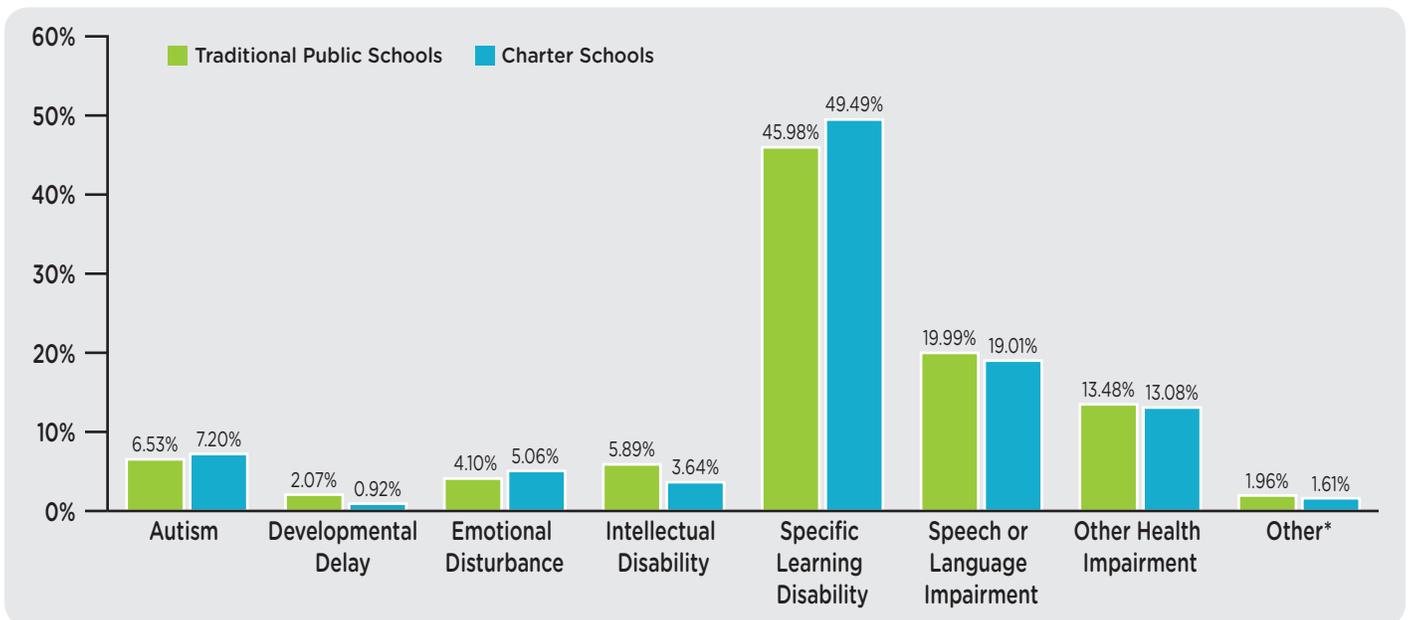


Figure 7. Enrollment Percentages by Type of Disability

* Includes Deaf-Blindness, Hearing Impairment, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairments, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and Visual Impairment categories.

other types of disabilities (e.g., multiple disabilities, hearing or visually impaired, and traumatic brain injury). However, the overall small number of students with these disabilities and associated privacy protections make comparisons challenging.

- Within charter schools, those that are part of an LEA enroll a notably larger percentage of students with speech or language impairments (21.37% vs. 17.85%)²⁶ compared to charters that are their own LEA (Figure 8).
- Conversely, within charter schools, those that operate as their own LEA enroll a notably greater percentage of students with emotional disturbance (6.15% vs. 3.10%)²⁷ (Figure 8).

Education Environment

While the CRDC does not contain detailed information on specific services provided, it does contain data regarding the extent to which students with disabilities are taught in general education classrooms (i.e., educational environment). In line with federal statutes, the general education classroom is treated as the presumptive placement because it maximizes students' access to the general education curriculum alongside their peers without disabilities. These percentages serve as a proxy for inclusion, which is measured through the percentage of the school day that a student with a disability spends in the general education classroom. Since IDEA and

Section 504 both have requirements related to providing students a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, it is relevant to consider the degree of inclusion of students with disabilities in traditional public schools compared to charter schools.

There are three primary degrees of inclusion: In the general education classroom 80% or more of the day; in the general education classroom between 40% and 79% of the day; and in the general education classroom 39% or less of the day. Figures 9 and 10 show the percentage of students with disabilities at each of the three tiers by type of school.

- In general, charter schools report a larger percentage of students with disabilities (84.27%) spending 80% or more of their time in the regular education classroom than traditional public schools (68.09%).²⁸ This is similar to that observed in 2011-12 at 84.11% for charter schools and 66.85% for traditional public schools (see Figures 9 & 10).
- 8.67% of students with disabilities in charter schools were in the general education classroom between 40% and 79% of the day compared to 18.53% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools. This is slightly lower than that observed in 2011-12 at 9.60% for charter schools and 19.46% for traditional public schools.²⁹

²⁶Not statistically significant.
²⁷Not statistically significant.

²⁸Some of these differences are most likely attributable to the profile of students enrolling in charter schools (i.e., more students identified as having a specific learning disability and speech and language impairment that typically require fewer services or more restrictive settings). However, limitations of the CRDC dataset did not allow us to explore these correlations.
²⁹Due to data limitations, significance testing was not done for comparisons of the 2011-12 and 2013-14 data.

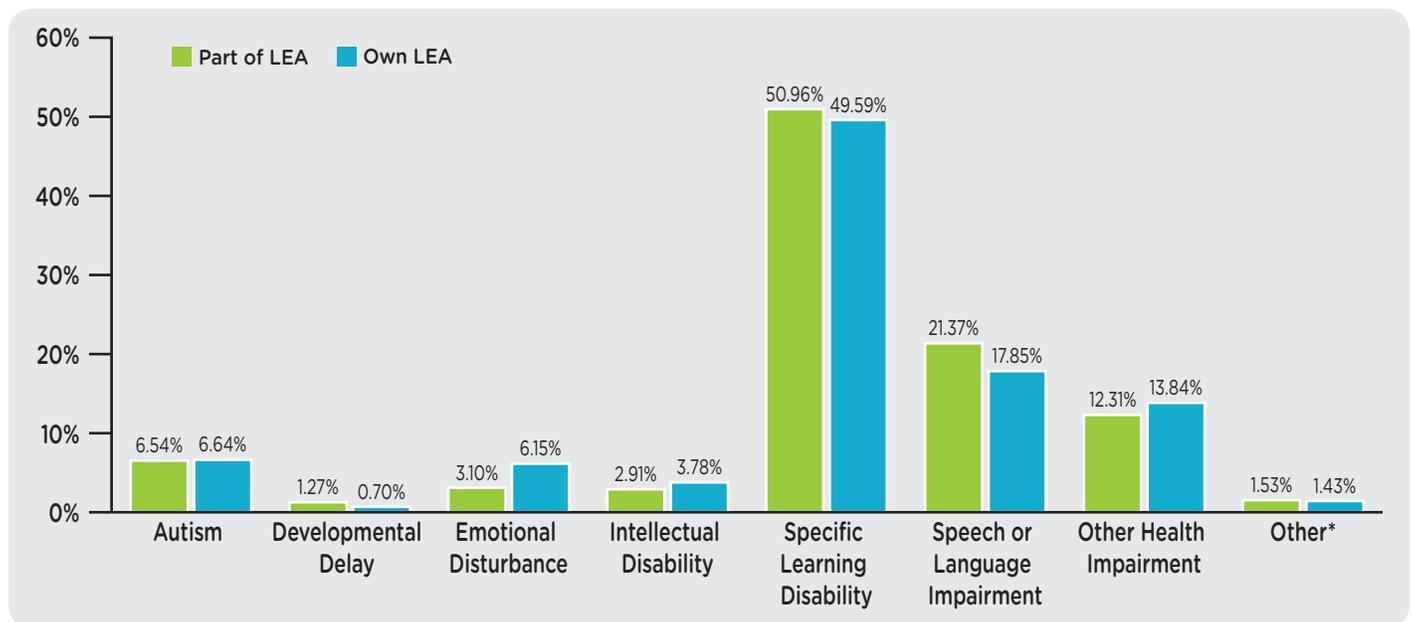


Figure 8. Enrollment Percentages by Charter Legal Status

* Includes Deaf-Blindness, Hearing Impairment, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairments, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and Visual Impairment categories.

- 5.08% of students with disabilities in charter schools were in the general education classroom for 39% or less of the day, compared to 11.78% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools. This is comparable to that observed in 2011–12 at 4.49% for charter schools and 11.67% for traditional public schools.³⁰

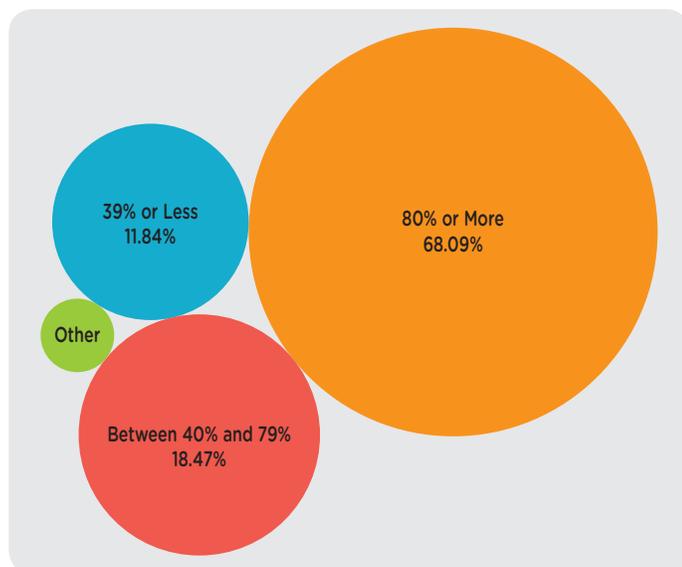


Figure 9. Students with Disabilities in Traditional Public Schools in the Regular Education Classroom by Percentage of Time

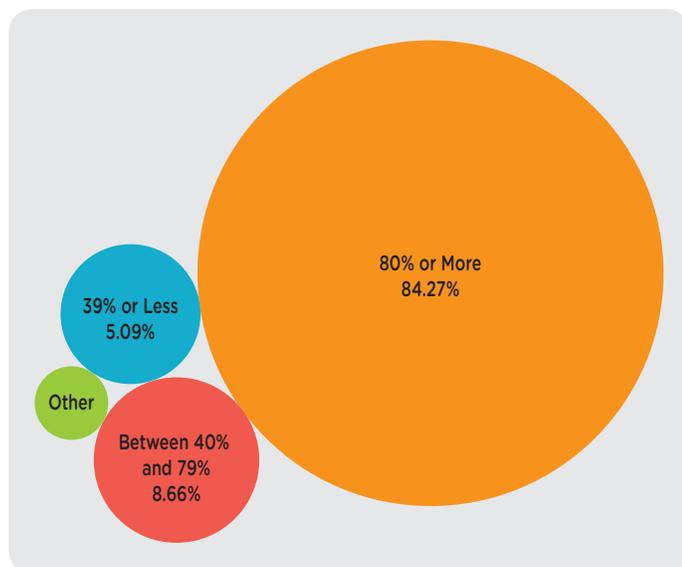


Figure 10. Students with Disabilities in Charter Schools in the Regular Education Classroom by Percentage of Time

Discipline of Students in Charter and Traditional Public Schools

Students with disabilities have historically been disciplined at significantly higher rates than their peers without disabilities.³¹ The 2013–2014 data documented similar trends to the 2011–2012 release. That is, students with disabilities continue to be disciplined roughly twice as often as their peers without disabilities, and this trend applies across both types of schools.

Suspensions

Schools frequently struggle to balance establishing a positive school culture while effectively disciplining students whose behaviors are disruptive to the learning environment. The CRDC includes national and state-level suspension data for students with disabilities and nondisabled peers in charter and traditional public schools.

- In general, students with *disabilities* are suspended approximately twice as often as their *nondisabled* peers across all schools (Figure 11).³²
- Charter schools suspend a greater percentage of all their students than other public schools (i.e., 6.61% vs. 5.64%).³³

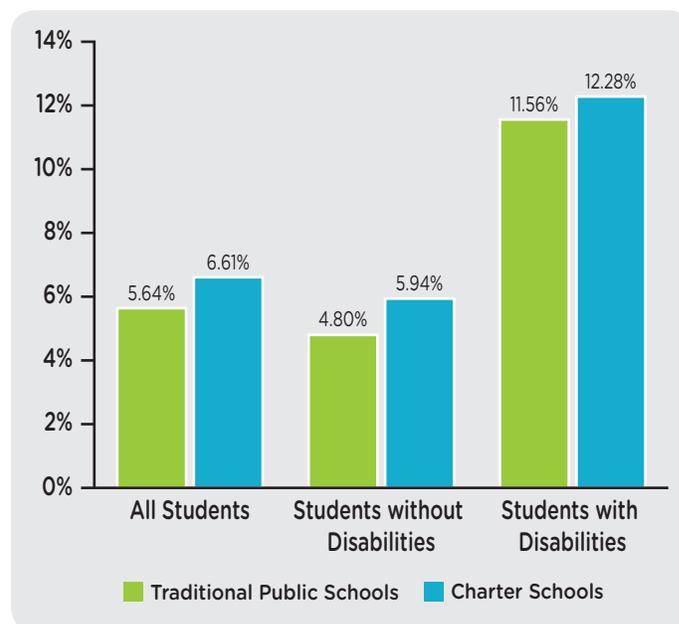


Figure 11. Percentage of Students with at Least One Out-of-School Suspension from Total Enrollment, Separated by Student Group

³⁰Due to data limitations, significance testing was not done for comparisons of the 2011–12 and 2013–14 data.

³¹Rethinking Discipline. (2017, January 04). Retrieved January 18, 2018, from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline>.

³²Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 5.68, 95% CI [5.49, 5.86].

³³Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 1, 95% CI [0.81, 1.20].

- Overall suspension rates for all students have decreased for both charter schools and traditional public schools since 2011-12 from 6.88% to 5.44% for traditional public schools and 7.40% to 6.61% for charter schools (Figure 12).³⁴

- Charters that are their own LEA also report higher overall suspensions for both students with (14.11% vs. 10.08%)³⁵ and without (7.37% vs. 4.52%)³⁶ disabilities compared to charters that are a part of an LEA (Figure 13).

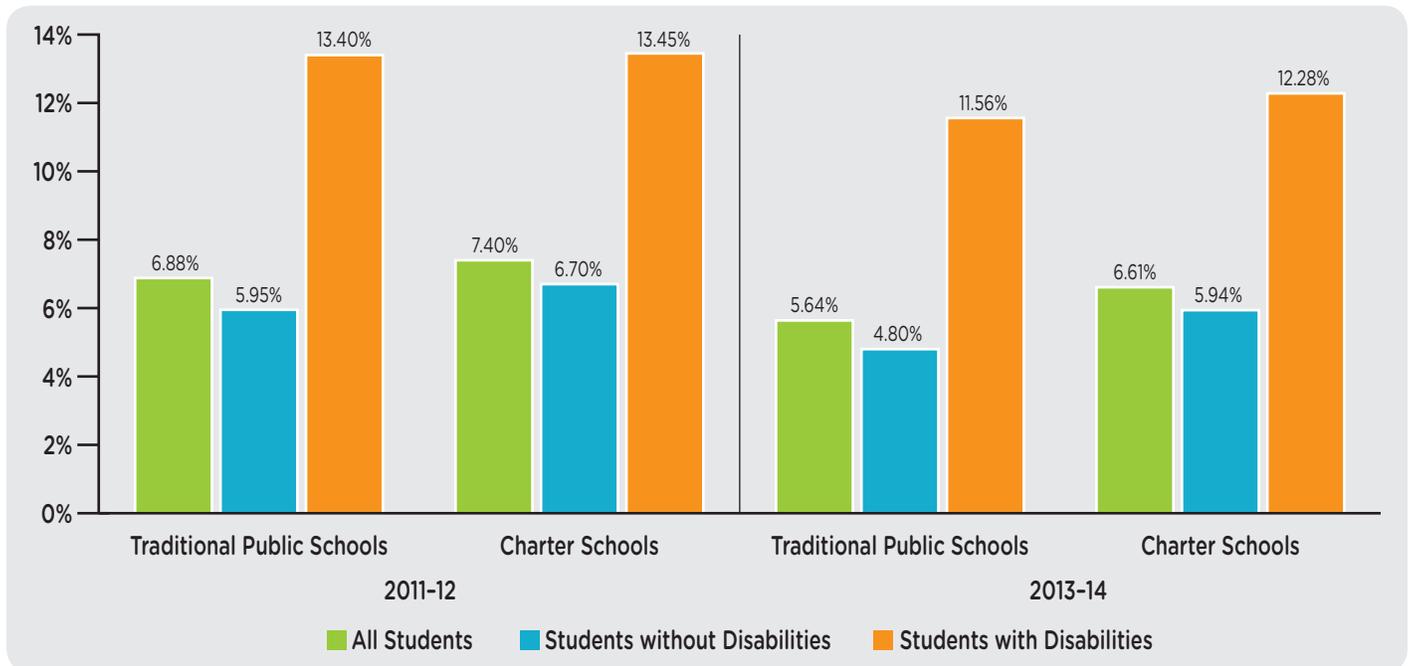


Figure 12. Percentage of Students with at Least One Out-of-School Suspension from Total Enrollment, Separated by Student Group from 2011-12 and 2013-14

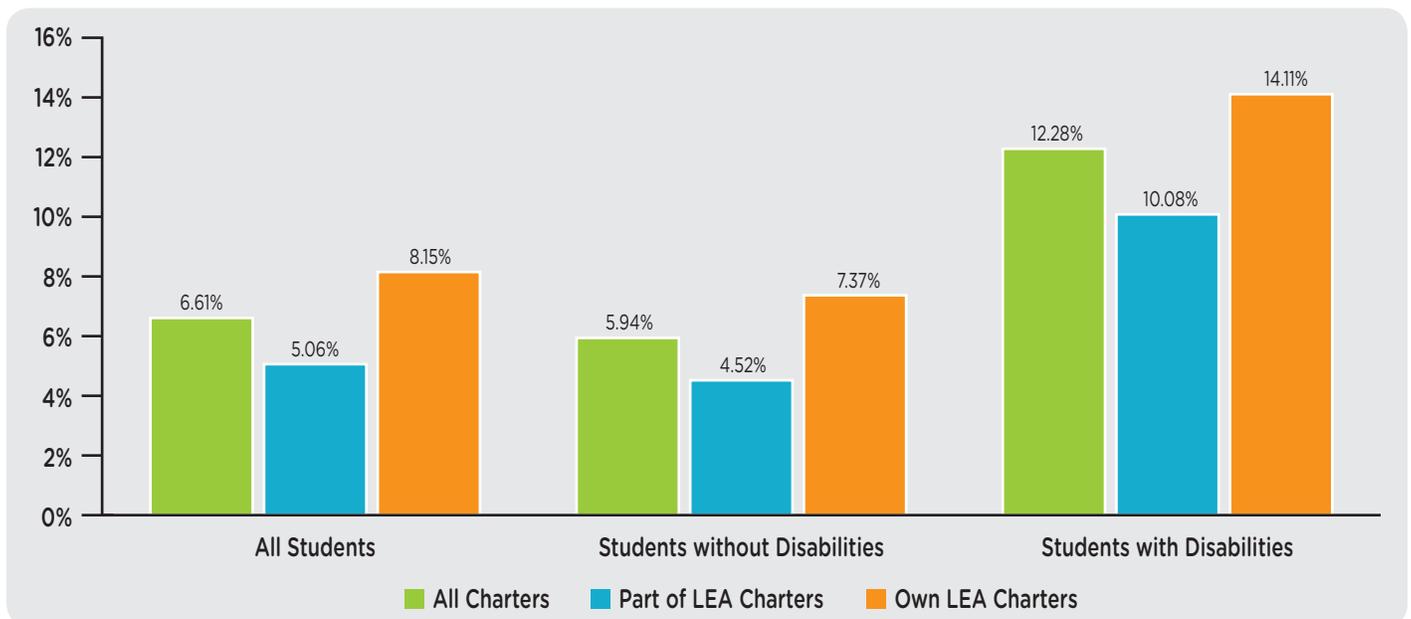


Figure 13. Percentage of Students with at Least One Out-of-School Suspension from Total Enrollment, Separated by Student Group and Charter LEA Type 2013-2014

³⁴Significance testing was not done for comparisons of the 2011-12 and 2013-14 data.

³⁵Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 1.38, 95% CI [1.02, 1.74].

³⁶Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 3.84, 95% CI [2.04, 5.65].

Expulsions

Expulsion is an action taken by the local educational agency of removing a child from his/her regular school for the remainder of the school year or longer.³⁷

- Across both traditional public and charter schools, the rates of expulsion are low (< 1%).
- In general, students with *disabilities* are expelled more frequently than *nondisabled* peers across all schools (Figure 14).³⁸
- Charter schools expel a slightly lesser percentage of their students than other public schools (i.e., 0.20% vs. 0.26%) (Figure 14).³⁹
- Expulsion rates for all students decreased for charter schools from 0.28% to 0.20% since 2011-12 (Figure 15).⁴⁰
- Charters that are their own LEA report higher overall expulsions for both students without (0.28% vs. 0.08%)⁴¹ and with (0.54% vs. 0.20%)⁴² disabilities compared to charters that are a part of an LEA (Figure 16).

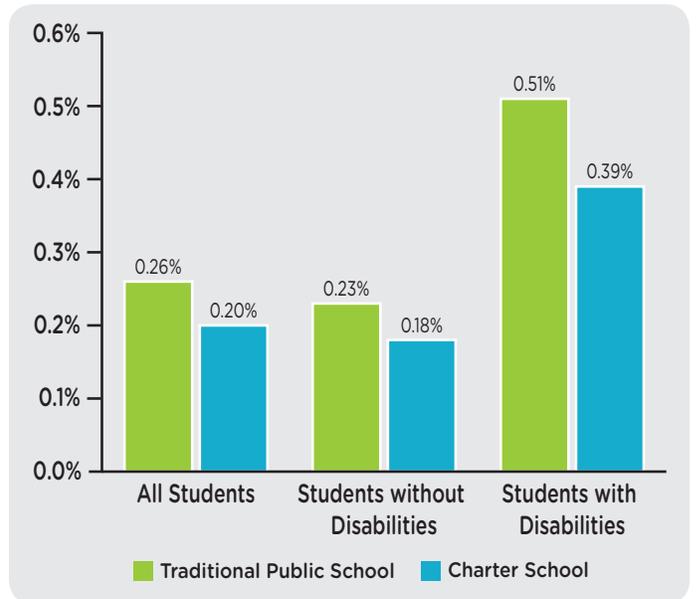


Figure 14. Percentages of Expelled (with and without educational services) Students Overall 2013-2014

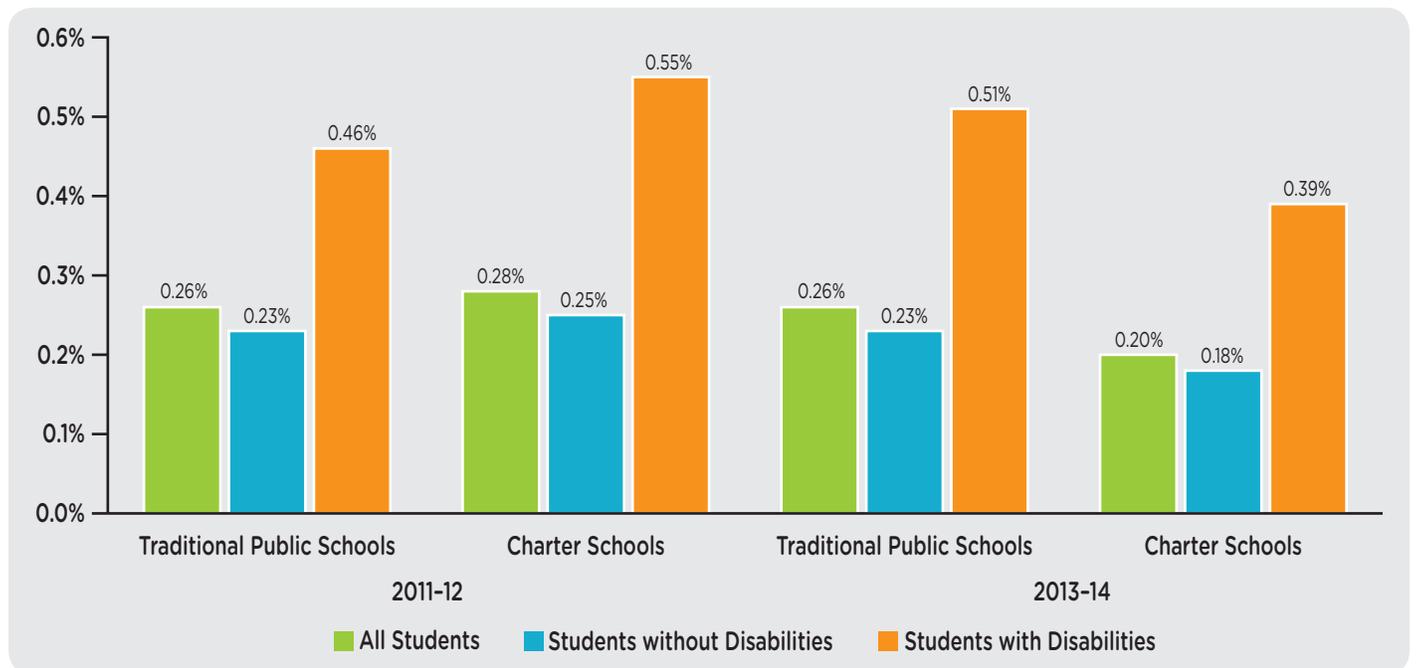


Figure 15. Percentages of Expelled Students from 2011-12 and 2013-14

³⁷U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *CRDC Data Definitions* [CRDC 2013-14 Definitions]. Retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/DataDefinitions> (accessed Nov 27, 2017).

³⁸Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 0.13, 95% CI [0.11, 0.15].

³⁹Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 0.03, 95% CI [0.03, 0.04].

⁴⁰Due to data limitations, significance testing was not done for comparisons of the 2011-12 and 2013-14 data.

⁴¹Significantly different, with a *p*-value <0.05, *M* = 0.06, 95% CI [0.03, 0.10].

⁴²Not statistically significant.

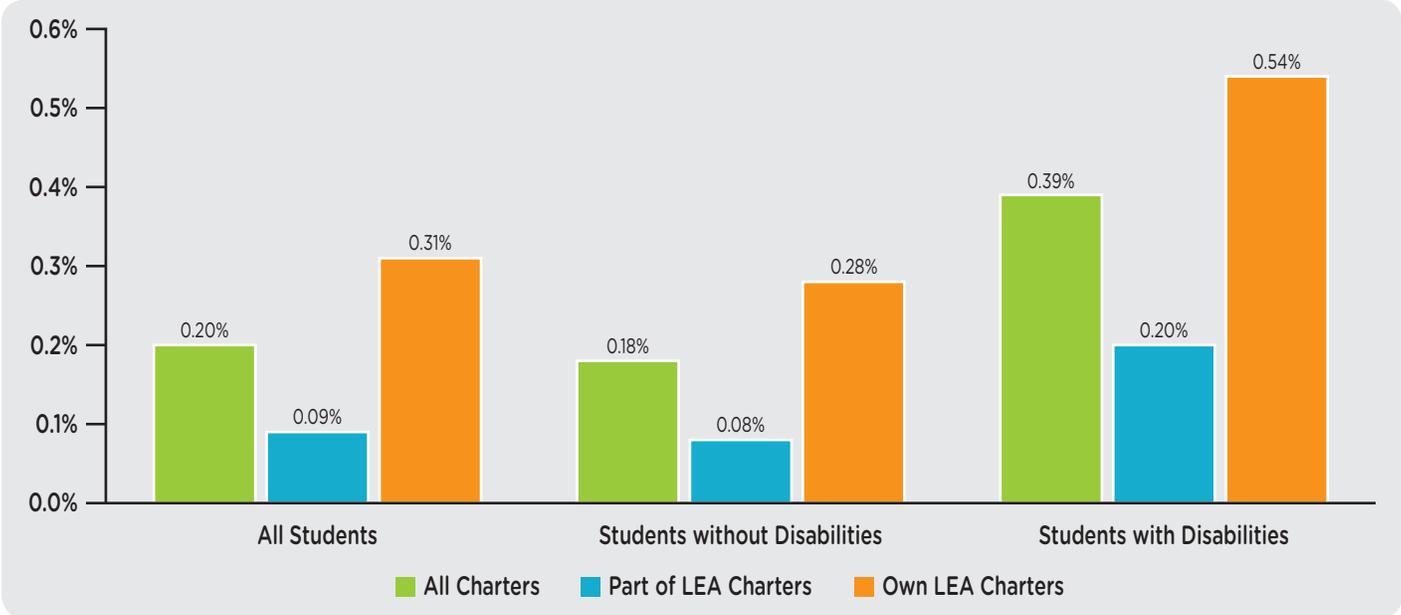


Figure 16. Percentages of Expelled Students by LEA Status 2013-2014





Specialized Charter Schools

Within the discussion about special education in charter schools, there is a separate but related debate about charter schools that specialize in educating students with disabilities.¹ The question of whether or not these schools unnecessarily segregate students with disabilities and therefore limit their access to the general education curriculum and interactions with their nondisabled peers is important in light of the construct of least restrictive environment, which is a key tenet of IDEA.

While traditional public school systems have historically operated specialized schools, each reauthorization of the IDEA has introduced a greater commitment to inclusive classrooms and efforts to reduce the number of segregated ones or “center-based programs”—settings in which students with disabilities have little if any interaction with their nondisabled peers. Accordingly, there is concern that the growth of specialized charter schools may translate into an increase in the number of segregated settings rather than a decrease as mandated by the broad goals of IDEA.

Overall Enrollment at Specialized Charter Schools

Using a variety of sources, including CRDC data, Mead’s report,² and independent research by NCSECS staff, we identified 137 charter schools that meet our definition of specialized (see Appendix C for a complete list of specialized schools by disability focus).

- 127 of the 137 specialized charter schools were identified by the CRDC report and/or Mead’s report.
- Of the 137 schools, 89 (64.96%) enroll over 50% students with disabilities. The rest of the schools enroll at least 25% students with disabilities. On average, specialized charter schools in our subset have a 65.24% enrollment of students with disabilities.

Enrollment by Disability Type at Specialized Charter Schools

- Most specialized schools (62.04%) have a focus on two or more IDEA categories.³
- In terms of more specific disability categories, emotional disturbance (13.14%) and autism (10.95%) are the most represented (see Figure 17).

¹ We define specialized charter schools as charter schools with 25% or more enrollment of students with disabilities that self-identify as “special education schools” in CRDC reporting and/or schools that report that 50% or more of their students qualify for special education under IDEA and Section 504. Such schools serve students across the entire disability spectrum.

² Consists of a list of specialized schools compiled by Julie Mead for a federal research study. Mead, J. F. (2008, January). *Charter Schools Designed for Children with Disabilities: An Initial Examination of Issues and Questions Raised*. Retrieved from <http://nasdse.org/Portals/0/Web%20copy%20of%20Mead%20report-Jan%202008.pdf>.

³ The 13 categories of disability according to IDEA are Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Deafness, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Speech or Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visual Impairment (including Blindness).

Specialized Charter School Locations by State

In addition to understanding the disability focus of specialized charter schools, NCSECS also examined how these schools are distributed across the United States (Figure 18).

- Florida, Ohio, and Texas are the three states with the highest number of specialized charter schools. It should be noted that in Ohio, the Summit Academy network in the state accounts for 27 of that state’s 34 specialized charter schools. In Florida and Texas, most of the schools are not in large networks as they are in Ohio.⁴
- The most-represented disability focuses are not necessarily the same among specialized charter schools in Florida, Ohio, and Texas. In Florida, the majority of specialized charter schools have a general focus (18), followed by a focus on autism (7) and developmental delay (6). In Ohio, 27 schools are focused on two or more disabilities (the Summit Academy network, which comprises the majority of Ohio’s specialized

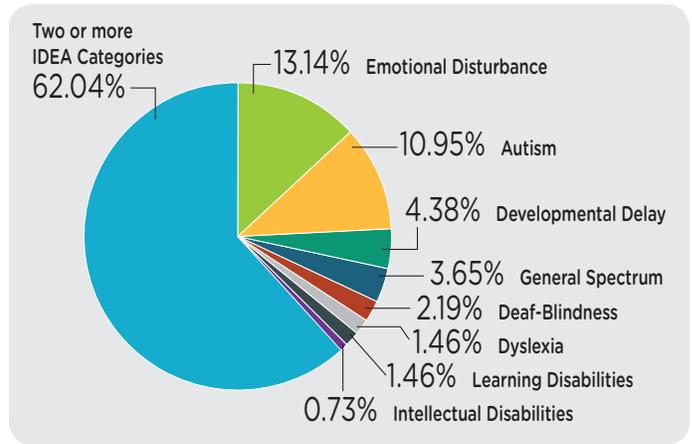


Figure 17. Specialized Schools by Focus Area

charter schools, mentions autism and Specific Learning Disabilities in particular as areas of priority). Texas, the state with the third-highest number of specialized charter schools, is different from the other two states, since Emotional Disturbance is the most common disability focus (10 schools).

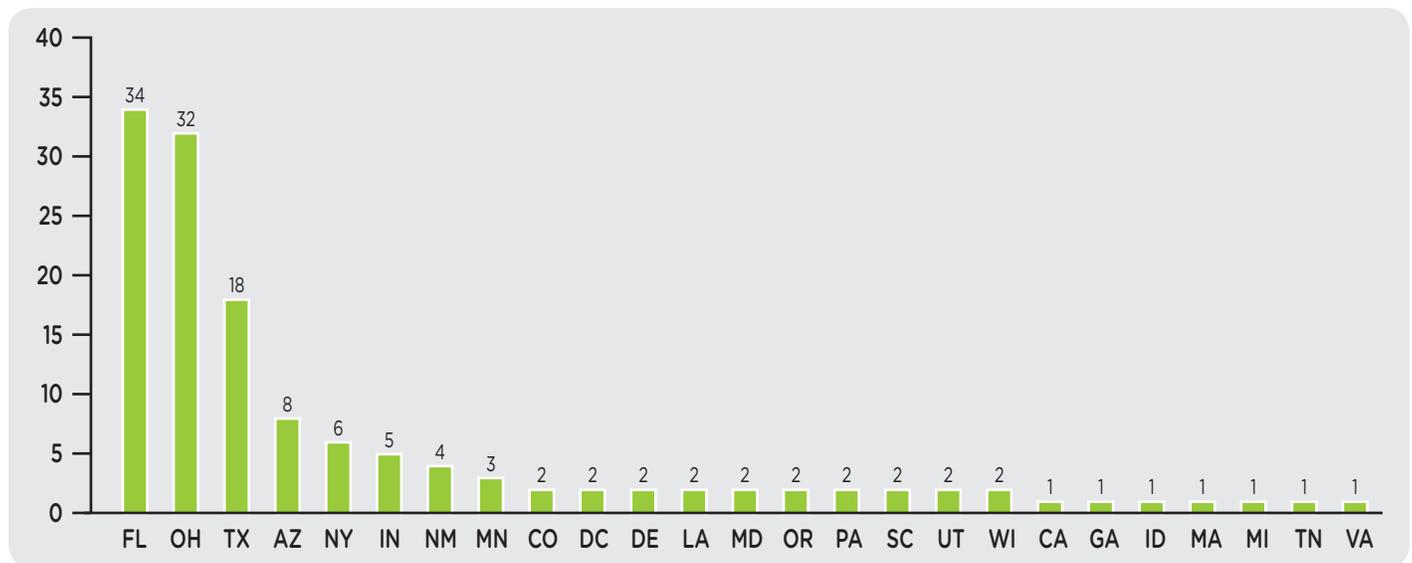


Figure 18. Specialized Schools by State

⁴ It is important to note that some states (e.g., Florida, Ohio, Tennessee, etc.) encourage the creation of charter schools that serve a majority of students with specific disabilities; however, this does not always lead to a higher number of specialized charter schools in the state. (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, *Measuring Up to the Model: A Tool for Comparing State Charter School Laws*. Component: Clear Student Recruitment, Enrollment and Lottery Preferences. <https://www.publiccharters.org/publications/measuring-model-ranking-state-charter-public-school-laws>).



Discussion

The data from the 2013–2014 CRDC confirm that students with disabilities are enrolling in charter schools, but there remains room to improve access nationwide and in particular—in some states and for some students with specific disabilities—where the differences are particularly large. It is worth noting that while the most recent published by OCR, these data are more than three years old and may not mirror the current reality in charter schools. In particular, recent adoption of uniform enrollment systems in cities with a large proportion of charter schools (e.g., Denver, Newark, New Orleans, and Washington, DC) may be significantly improving access for students with a diverse range of disabilities. The release of the 2015–2016 CRDC dataset will provide additional insight into whether this policy tool is in fact advancing the goal of equal access.

The analysis related to charter legal status indicates that being part of a district, and thereby sharing responsibility for educating students with disabilities with the larger district, leads to fewer students with disabilities enrolling in charter schools. Students with disabilities may be being referred to existing district specialized programs. While this practice is legal under federal statute and historically how traditional districts have operated, it surfaces questions about the extent to which students with disabilities are able to access choice on par with their peers without disabilities when charter schools operate as part of a district.

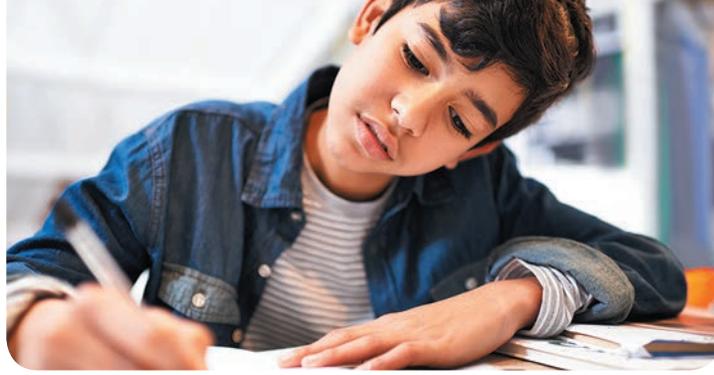
The analysis related to enrollment by disability category reveals interesting data related to who is choosing and, conversely, choosing not to enroll in charter schools. When coupled with the data related to inclusion, the fact that charter schools are enrolling students who typically require more significant supports (e.g., students with autism and emotional disturbance) may indicate that charter schools are serving similar students in more inclusive settings than traditional public schools. However, absent additional details related to level of intensity of services and outcomes, it is premature to draw any conclusions. Notably, the similar discipline rates in charter and traditional public schools may

signal similar levels of success in creating positive learning environments. However, both sectors continue to record disproportionate rates of disciplining of students with disabilities relative to their peers without disabilities.

As the charter sector continues to grow and serve not only more students nationally, but a significant or majority proportion of students in public schools in certain cities or regions (e.g., Kansas City, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Newark, and Washington, DC), pressure to address and resolve potential barriers, ensure equal access, and provide quality, and ideally, innovative, supports for diverse learners will continue to mount. In anticipation of this growth, stakeholders leading efforts to grow and support the sector need to address the various challenges autonomous charter schools face (e.g., small size, limited resources, and access to existing special education structures and supports) when working to provide quality instruction and supports to all students. And, the entities charged with ensuring that charter schools fulfill their mission—that is the USED, state educational agencies, and charter school authorizers—must strive to develop and sustain accountability systems that honor the autonomy that creates opportunity for innovation while simultaneously maintaining high expectations for charter schools related to equity.

Overall, the CRDC dataset provide us with insight into the status of students with disabilities in the charter sector, but fall short of providing credible insight into the factors that influence behaviors captured in the data. Our extensive work with states, districts, authorizers, support organizations, and individual charter schools tell us that a complex array of policy and practical factors shape the experience of students with disabilities who exercise their right to choose to enroll in either a traditional or chartered public school. Looking to the future, we will continue to track the data captured by the CRDC and discern the leading factors that help or hinder students with disabilities to exercise choice and succeed in charter schools.

Policy Recommendations



Our secondary analysis of the 2013–2014 CRDC updates our understanding of the status of students with disabilities in the charter sector established by our analysis of the 2011–2012 data and begins to establish trend lines regarding the extent to which students with disabilities are accessing and being served in charter schools across the country. Charter schools are enrolling and serving students with disabilities, but there are differences between traditional public schools and charter schools in terms of the representation of students with disabilities both in terms of proportion and profile. However, over time, the enrollment differences between the two sectors is continuing to decrease. There is notable variability across and within states that should be tracked in the interest of ensuring students with disabilities having equitable access to charter schools. Based on our secondary analyses of the data and ongoing work advocating for students with disabilities to ensure they are able to access and thrive in charter schools, we propose the following recommendations for federal, state, and local policy makers and practitioners. If implemented, we propose these actions will ensure equitable access and catalyze development and adoption of innovative strategies that will benefit students with disabilities.

Federal Level

- Continue collection and analysis of large-scale datasets (e.g., the CRDC) by the USED to inform critical policies and related regulations and guidance.
- Maintain and strengthen guidance provided by USED to charter school authorizers and operators to ensure compliance with policies outlined in the ADA, IDEA, and Section 504.
- Prioritize and sustain investments that build charter school capacity to serve students with diverse learning needs (e.g., Charter School Program National Leadership Activities grants and carve outs of State Education Agency grants for technical assistance to charter schools).

State Level

- Ensure key state offices, such as the chief state school officer, state director of special education, and state charter school officers, collaborate with one another and charter school authorizers to articulate clear policies and accountability frameworks associated with upholding civil rights statutes such as ADA, IDEA, and Section 504.
- Require that relevant state agency divisions conduct periodic reviews of state policies and authorizing practices—especially when there are notable differences in enrollment of students with disabilities in traditional and charter schools—to ensure that any differences are not due to discriminatory policies and practices.

Local Level

Charter Schools

- Allocate adequate resources to support provision of supports and services to students with disabilities (e.g., traditional public schools generally allocate 20–25% of their budget to special education¹).
- Build capacity of general and special education teachers regarding identifying and providing appropriate special education and related services to students with a diverse range of disabilities.
- Communicate explicit commitment to serving students with disabilities in promotional materials and ensure staff who interact with parents are knowledgeable about the school's responsibility to provide a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Charter School Authorizers

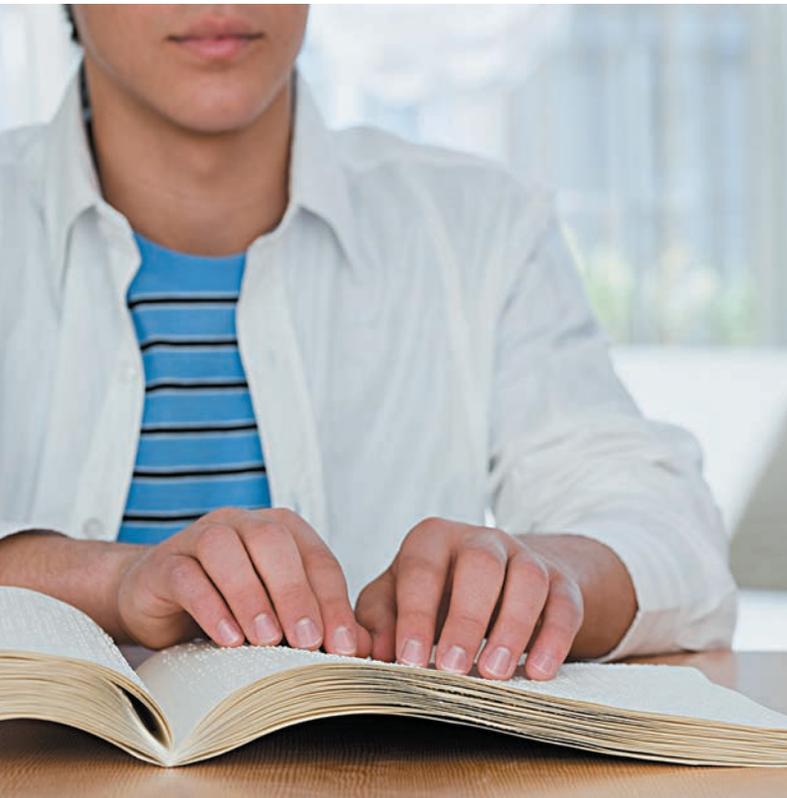
- Provide school leaders and both general and special education teachers with professional learning and technical assistance to support students with diverse learning needs.
- Track the accessibility, safety, and performance of all students to ensure that students with disabilities are afforded the same opportunities in charter schools as all other students.

Charter Support Organizations

- Embed robust content (i.e., more than basic compliance 101) regarding educating students with disabilities into application support materials and incubation efforts for new and turnaround schools.
- Provide resources and tools to assist charter schools to understand their responsibilities related to students with disabilities and build and sustain capacity to provide quality services and supports.
- Foster relationships between charter schools and existing special education support structures (e.g., intermediate education agencies) to ensure charter schools are accessing all available resources.

Private Philanthropy

- Leverage the grantmaking process to drive access and outcomes for students with disabilities by tracking metrics (e.g., enrollment and academic growth) related to serving students with disabilities.
- Identify grant metrics that reward schools that demonstrate growth for all students as opposed to absolute performance, which can serve as a disincentive to serve students with disabilities.
- Offer financial incentives to charter schools to develop or adopt innovative programs that benefit students with disabilities.



¹ <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/SEEP1-What-Are-We-Spending-On.pdf>.

Appendix A: Methodology



The purpose of this report was to better understand the special education landscape in both charter and traditional public schools in the nation. Using the CRDC data from 2013–14, key variables such as total enrollment, enrollment by student disability category, type of school, provision of special education and related services, discipline information, and school specialization were examined. The following details the methodology used to assess the findings in this report. For a more comprehensive explanation of the data analysis, see www.ncsecs.org/crdc-13-14-methodology.

Overall Enrollment of Students with Disabilities

The CRDC included data from 95,196 public schools from across the US. Of these, 6,129 were charter schools. In order to ensure accurate and complete data values for the secondary analysis, the following steps were taken.

1. Any data points having privacy-protected values, missing values, and values marked “Not applicable” were removed from the analysis.
2. Schools that were incorrectly classified as charter schools were reclassified.
3. Because the CRDC disaggregated total enrollment variables by gender, we combined the gender counts to create a total enrollment (for IDEA enrollment, Section 504 enrollment, and overall total enrollment).

IDEA Enrollment

After cleaning, the IDEA analysis included 84,991 schools. Of these schools, 4,871 were charters and 80,120 were traditional public schools. This translated to 89.64% of all CRDC traditional public schools and 79.47% of all CRDC charters.

Section 504 Enrollment

After cleaning, the Section 504 analysis included 95,482 schools. Of these schools, 6,110 were charters and 89,372 were traditional public schools. This translated to 100% of all CRDC traditional public schools and 99.85% of all CRDC charters.

Determining LEA Status

Since the CRDC data did not contain any information pertaining to charter legal status, we used three variables from the 2013–14 Common Core of Data (CCD) Local Education Agency Universe file to determine a charter’s legal status.

1. An “Education Agency Type Code” of 7 (agencies for which all associated schools are charter schools).
2. An “Agency Charter Code” of 1 (all associated schools are charter schools).
3. An “LEA Charter Status” of CHRTIDEAESEA (charter district that is an LEA for programs authorized under IDEA, ESEA, and Perkins), CHRTESEA (charter district that is an LEA for programs authorized under ESEA and Perkins but not under IDEA), or CHRTIDEA (charter district that is an LEA for programs authorized under IDEA but not under ESEA and Perkins).

A charter school was considered its own LEA if its administrative district met the criteria listed above. If the charter school did not meet the criteria, it was considered part of an LEA. Using this methodology, we identified 2,253 charters as being part of an LEA and 2,618 charters as being their own LEA.

Enrollment by Disability Category and Educational Placement

When the 2013–14 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) was released, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) provided 17 ED Facts appended data files. Because the appended files contained pertinent information for some analyses presented in this report not found within the CRDC, it was necessary to combine the two datasets. We combined the cleaned version of the CRDC used for our report on IDEA enrollment by school type with the ED Facts appended data file titled “ID 74 SCH – Educational Placement by Gender by Disability.” Our match rate for this merge was 96.32% and included 81,861 schools in total. The data were then disaggregated by the 13 disability types and 4 educational placement categories for further analysis.

Discipline of Students

Each analysis presented in this section drew from a range of discipline-related variables within the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). Although discipline data was not affected by privacy-protected values, there were instances of missing and not applicable values that were removed in the cleaning process. Moreover, some discipline analyses contained more instances of missing values than others. As a result, the number of schools included in each analysis varied.

For all the analyses described in this section, the relevant CRDC variables were disaggregated by both disability status and gender. The gender variables were combined to form aggregate totals for students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Aggregate totals for each school were linked to the school’s enrollment data in order to generate a discipline rate by discipline category—suspensions and expulsions.

Specialized Charter Schools

A specialized school is one that primarily or entirely focuses on serving students with either a particular disability or any disability. In order to identify schools that could be considered specialized, the following steps were used:

1. From the CRDC data, a subset of all schools that reported $\geq 25\%$ enrollment of students with disabilities was obtained.
2. Of these data, schools that had self-identified as specialized were included in the list.
3. Schools that did not self-identify as specialized but enrolled $\geq 50\%$ students with disabilities were cross-checked with other databases and NCSECS’s own research. Comparisons were made to the 2011–12 CRDC data, the Wisconsin Charter School Yearbook of 2016–17, and a list compiled by Julie Mead in 2008 for a federally funded research study. Further, these schools were opportunistically identified through tracking in Google News Alerts, website searches, and email and phone correspondence with school representatives. Adjustments were made based on whether or not the status of schools had changed (e.g., a closure, verified as not specialized etc.).
4. Schools that were included in the final list were further categorized by state and disability focus.

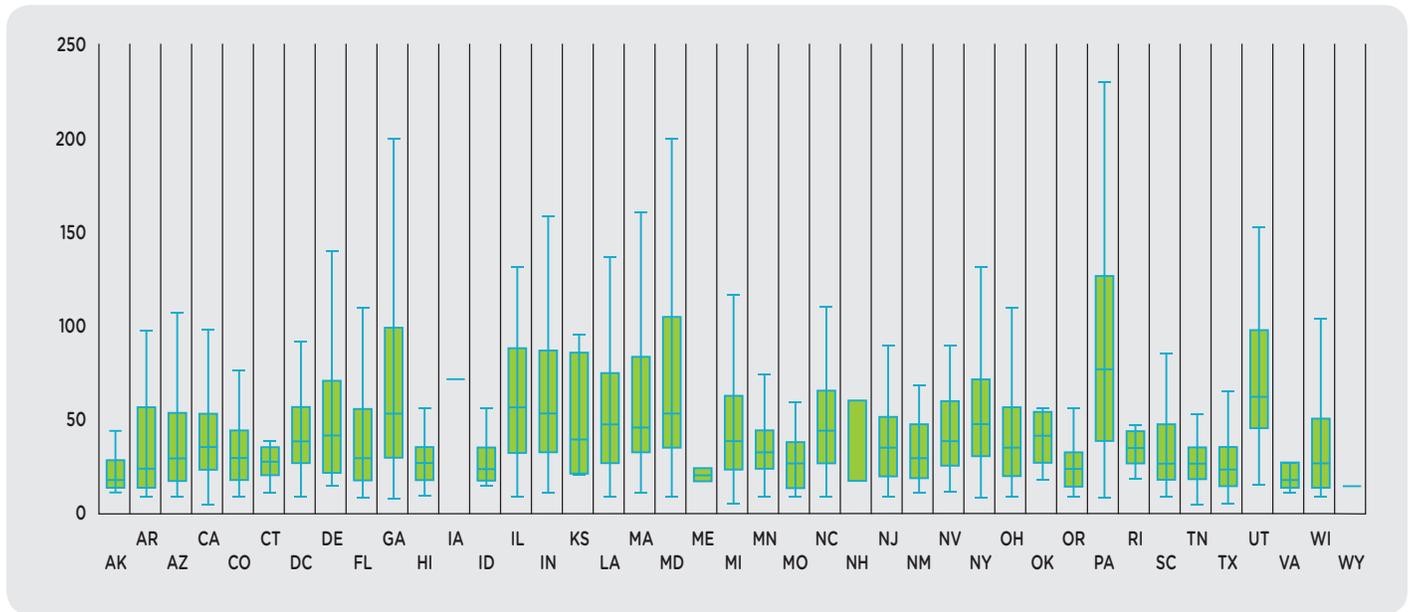
A total of 137 schools were identified as specialized charter schools.

For a detailed explanation of methods, limitations, and complete data tables for the analyses, refer to www.ncsecs.org/crdc-13-14-methodology.

Appendix B: Box-and-Whisker Plot for within State Variance

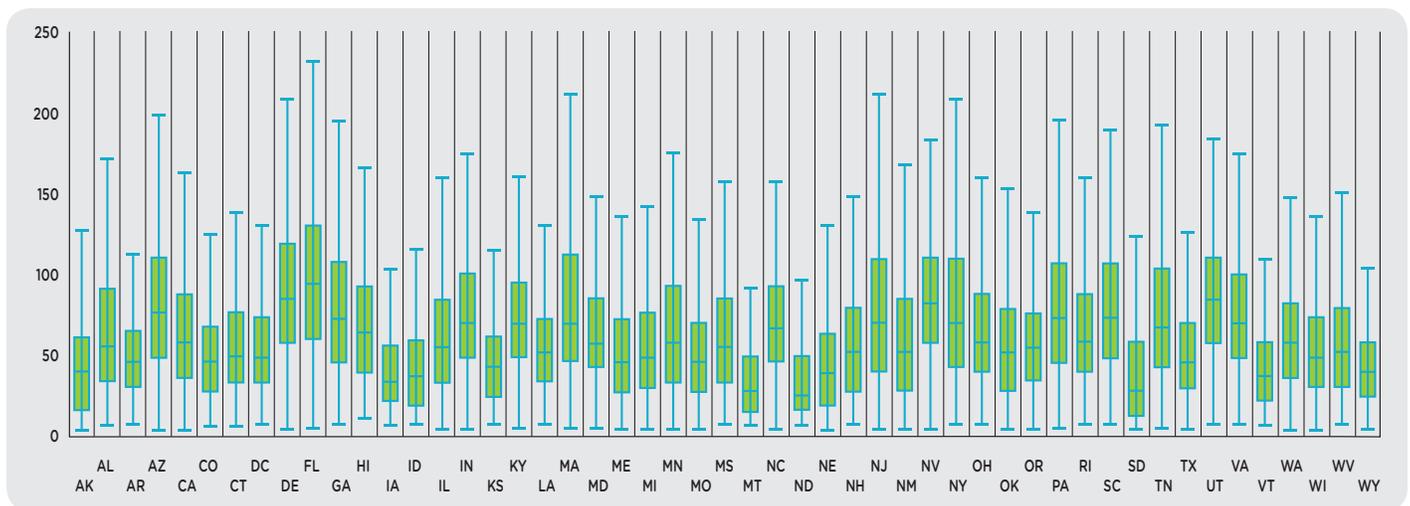


Figure B1: Charter School IDEA Enrollment Box-and-Whisker*



*Outliers (defined as being more than 3/2 times the 75th percentile) are suppressed.

Figure B2. Traditional Public School IDEA Enrollment Box-and-Whisker*



*Outliers (defined as being more than 3/2 times the 75th percentile) are suppressed.

Interpreting Box-and-Whisker Plot

The Box-and-Whisker plot is a graphical representation of the distribution of data. It presents several measures of dispersion (the minimum, the lowest quartile, the median, the upper quartile, the maximum, and outliers) in the same visual display.

Note that the median (50th percentile) of observations is represented by the blue horizontal line within each box. The top part of the box contains all observations in the 75th percentile, whereas the bottom part of the box represents all observations in the bottom 25th percentile. In other words, the box shows where most of the data points lie in the distribution (from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile). The whiskers (or the lines extending out from the box) show the minimum and maximum values of the distribution barring any outliers. Outliers are scores that are significantly above or below the rest of the distribution (the circles above or below the rest of the figure). Data points are considered outliers if they are either greater than $3/2$ times the 75th percentile or less than $3/2$ times the 25th percentile.

Indicator of Spread

The spread of data can be inferred by examining the length of both the box and the whiskers. The wider the whiskers, the more spread out the data is from the maximum and minimum points. The length of the box tells us how disperse the data is from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile.

Indicator of Symmetry

The position of the box within its whiskers and the position of the line in the box (the median) can reveal the extent to which the data is symmetric or skewed (either to the right or left). If the data is normally distributed (or symmetric), it can be inferred that there is roughly the same amount of data in each percentile group (25th, 50th, and 75th). A positive skew means that there is more data around the 25th percentile, and a negative skew means that there is more data around the 75th percentile.

Interpretation

- **Spread:** Looking at the range (the distance between the whiskers) tells us that there is a larger range of IDEA enrollment in Massachusetts than in Louisiana. If we look at the width of the two box plots, we can infer that MA also has more variability between the 1st and 3rd quartiles compared to LA. Moreover, we know that MA has a higher median.
- **Skewness & Centrality of Median:** By looking at where the median falls within the boxes, along with the width of the whiskers on either side, we can infer that IDEA enrollment in both MA and LA is positive skewed. This means that there are more schools reporting IDEA enrollment around the 25th percentile compared to the median and the 75th percentile.
- **Outliers:** Outliers do not really tell us much because they are so far away from the 25th and 75th percentile. This is why they were suppressed in the Excel file. However, it is noteworthy to point out that not only does MA appear to have more outliers, but it also has more outlier dispersion.



Appendix C: Specialized Charter Schools by Specialization



School Name	City	State	Specific Disability	Total Enrollment	Enrollment of Students with Disabilities	Source
AUTISM						
Arizona Autism Charter Schools	Phoenix	AZ	Autism	168	100.00%	NCSECS Research
South Florida Autism Charter School Inc.	Hialeah	FL	Autism	164	89.02%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
The Hope Charter Center for Autism	Jensen Beach	FL	Autism	32	90.63%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Florida Autism Charter School of Excellence	Tampa	FL	Autism	96	95.83%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Renaissance Learning Academy	West Palm Beach	FL	Autism	92	96.74%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Palm Beach School for Autism	Lake Worth	FL	Autism	249	97.19%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Princeton House Charter	Orlando	FL	Autism	161	98.14%	2013–2014 CRDC
Renaissance Learning Center	West Palm Beach	FL	Autism	110	100.00%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Margaret Brent Regional Center	New Carrollton	MD	Autism	104	100.00%	2013–2014 CRDC
Lionsgate Academy	Crystal	MN	Autism	166	93.37%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Broome Street Academy Charter High School	Orange	NY	Autism	271	32.84%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
New York Center for Autism Charter School	New York	NY	Autism	36	88.89%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
The Autism Academy of Learning	Toledo	OH	Autism	53	94.34%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Autism Model School	Toledo	OH	Autism	118	98.31%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
The Foundation School for Autism	San Antonio	TX	Autism	45	97.78%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
DEAF-BLINDNESS						
Sequoia School for The Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Mesa	AZ	Deaf-blindness	78	94.87%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Rocky Mountain Deaf School	Golden	CO	Deaf-blindness	70	92.86%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
ABQ Sign Language Academy	Albuquerque	NM	Deaf-blindness	87	47.13%	2011–2012 CRDC
DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY						
UCP Pine Hills Charter	Orlando	FL	Developmental Delay	65	44.62%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
UCP East Charter	Orlando	FL	Developmental Delay	255	49.02%	2011–2012 CRDC
UCP Transitional Learning Academy High School	Orlando	FL	Developmental Delay	34	94.12%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Capstone Academy Milton Charter School	Milton	FL	Developmental Delay	20	100.00%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Early Beginnings Academy Civic Center	Miami	FL	Developmental Delay	143	100.00%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
UCP Osceola Child Development	Kissimmee	FL	Developmental Delay	77	100.00%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC

School Name	City	State	Specific Disability	Total Enrollment	Enrollment of Students with Disabilities	Source
DYSLEXIA						
Louisiana Key Academy	Baton Rouge	LA	Dyslexia	294	42.00%	NCSECS Research
Max Charter Alternative Education	Thibodaux	LA	Dyslexia	118	24.58%	2013–2014 CRDC
EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE						
Northern AZ Academy for Career Dev. - Taylor	Taylor	AZ	Emotional Disturbance	67	29.85%	2013–2014 CRDC
Pinnacle High School - Tempe	Tempe	AZ	Emotional Disturbance	65	35.38%	2013–2014 CRDC
Pinnacle Virtual High School	Tempe	AZ	Emotional Disturbance	421	43.94%	2013–2014 CRDC
Positive Outcomes Charter School	Camden	DE	Emotional Disturbance	128	60.16%	2011–2012 CRDC
Ed Venture Charter School	Hypoluxo	FL	Emotional Disturbance	114	99.12%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Devereux Ackerman Academy	Kennesaw	GA	Emotional Disturbance	81	65.43%	NCSECS Research
Clara B. Ford Academy (SDA)	Dearborn Heights	MI	Emotional Disturbance	132	39.39%	2011–2012 CRDC
John W Lavelle Preparatory Charter School	Staten Island	NY	Emotional Disturbance	383	34.20%	2013–2014 CRDC
Orenda Charter School - Williams House	Lometa	TX	Emotional Disturbance	32	25.00%	2011–2012 CRDC
Trinity Charter School - Pegasus	Lockhart	TX	Emotional Disturbance	180	25.56%	2011–2012 CRDC
Helping Hand	Austin	TX	Emotional Disturbance	21	38.10%	2011–2012 CRDC
University of Texas University Charter School - Pathfinder Camp	Driftwood	TX	Emotional Disturbance	17	41.18%	2011–2012 CRDC
John H Wood Jr Charter School at Afton Oaks	Fort Myers	TX	Emotional Disturbance	130	52.31%	2011–2012 CRDC
New Horizons	Goldwaite	TX	Emotional Disturbance	47	55.32%	2011–2012 CRDC
University of Texas University Charter School - Depelchin-Richmond	Richmond	TX	Emotional Disturbance	17	64.71%	NCSECS Research
University of Texas University Charter School - Settlement Home	Austin	TX	Emotional Disturbance	33	66.67%	2011–2012 CRDC
Hill Country Youth Ranch	Ingram	TX	Emotional Disturbance	97	70.10%	2011–2012 CRDC
Orenda Charter School - Canyon Lakes	Lubbock	TX	Emotional Disturbance	53	77.36%	NCSECS Research
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES						
Goodwill Life Academy	Fort Myers	FL	Intellectual Disabilities	38	100.00%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
LEARNING DISABILITIES						
Arroyo Elementary School	Glendale	AZ	Learning Disabilities	549	30.42%	2013–2014 CRDC
The Einstein School, Inc.	Gainesville	FL	Learning Disabilities	102	51.96%	2013–2014 CRDC

School Name	City	State	Specific Disability	Total Enrollment	Enrollment of Students with Disabilities	Source
TWO OR MORE IDEA CATEGORIES						
Ombudsman - Charter East II	Phoenix	AZ	Two or more IDEA Categories	88	26.14%	2013–2014 CRDC
Sweetwater School	Glendale	AZ	Two or more IDEA Categories	534	37.45%	2013–2014 CRDC
Sequoia Charter	Santa Clarita	CA	Two or more IDEA Categories	55	90.91%	2013–2014 CRDC
Academy of Urban Learning	Denver	CO	Two or more IDEA Categories	156	26.28%	2013–2014 CRDC
Bridges PCS	Washington	DC	Two or more IDEA Categories	212	26.42%	2013–2014 CRDC
St. Coletta Special Education PCS	Washington	DC	Two or more IDEA Categories	253	99.21%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Gateway Lab School	Wilmington	DE	Two or more IDEA Categories	209	66.99%	NCSECS Research; 2011–12 CRDC
Montessori Academy of Early Enrichment, Inc.	Greenacres	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	198	46.46%	2011–2012 CRDC
Pepin Transitional School	Tampa	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	63	98.41%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Seagull Academy	West Palm Beach	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	63	98.41%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Our Children's Academy	Lake Wales	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	209	98.56%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Putnam Edge High School	Palatka	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	55	30.91%	2013–2014 CRDC
UCP Charter	Orlando	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	235	32.77%	2013–2014 CRDC
Learning Path Academy	West Palm Beach	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	125	42.40%	2013–2014 CRDC
Aspire Academy Charter	Orlando	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	108	43.52%	2013–2014 CRDC
Therapeutic Learning Center	St. Augustine	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	17	64.71%	2013–2014 CRDC
Achievement Academy	Lakeland	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	157	75.80%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Focus Academy	Temple Terrace	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	34	76.47%	2013–2014 CRDC
UCP Seminole Child Development	Sanford	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	67	79.10%	2013–2014 CRDC
UCP Transitional Learning Academy Middle School	Orlando	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	36	88.89%	2013–2014 CRDC
Easter Seals Child Develop, Db	Daytona Beach	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	49	95.92%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Access Charter	Orlando	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	105	96.19%	2013–2014 CRDC
Pepin Academies	Tampa	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	571	98.07%	2013–2014 CRDC
Our Children's Middle Academy	Lake Wales	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	69	98.55%	2013–2014 CRDC

School Name	City	State	Specific Disability	Total Enrollment	Enrollment of Students with Disabilities	Source
TWO OR MORE IDEA CATEGORIES (CONTINUED)						
Potentials Charter School	Riviera Beach	FL	Two or more IDEA Categories	26	100.00%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Another Choice Virtual Charter	Nampa	ID	Two or more IDEA Categories	352	32.95%	2011–2012 CRDC
Options Charter School - Carmel	Carmel	IN	Two or more IDEA Categories	168	26.19%	2013–2014 CRDC
Indianapolis Metropolitan High School	Indianapolis	IN	Two or more IDEA Categories	265	27.92%	2013–2014 CRDC
Rural Community Academy	Graysville	IN	Two or more IDEA Categories	152	30.92%	2013–2014 CRDC
Canaan Community Academy	Canaan	IN	Two or more IDEA Categories	80	40.00%	2013–2014 CRDC
Damar Charter Academy	Indianapolis	IN	Two or more IDEA Categories	161	98.14%	2011–2012 CRDC
Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School	Lowell	MA	Two or more IDEA Categories	103	36.89%	2013–2014 CRDC
James E. Duckworth Regional Center	Beltsville	MD	Two or more IDEA Categories	104	100.00%	2013–2014 CRDC
Minnesota Internship Center - Downtown Campus	Minneapolis	MN	Two or more IDEA Categories	65	53.85%	NCSECS Research
Spero Academy	Minneapolis	MN	Two or more IDEA Categories	78	91.03%	2011–2012 CRDC
La Resolana Leadership	Albuquerque	NM	Two or more IDEA Categories	78	25.64%	2013–2014 CRDC
Robert F Kennedy High Charter School	Albuquerque	NM	Two or more IDEA Categories	222	26.58%	2013–2014 CRDC
Jefferson Montessori	Carlsbad	NM	Two or more IDEA Categories	186	30.11%	2013–2014 CRDC
Child Development Center of The Hamptons Charter School	Wainscott	NY	Two or more IDEA Categories	83	38.55%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Opportunity Charter School	New York	NY	Two or more IDEA Categories	453	51.43%	NCSECS Research
John V Lindsay Wildcat Academy Charter School	New York	NY	Two or more IDEA Categories	439	27.11%	2013–2014 CRDC
Tomorrow Center	Edison	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	123	30.89%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Virtual Schoolhouse, Inc.	Cleveland	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	403	45.16%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Lighthouse Community School Inc.	Cincinnati	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	60	73.33%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Summit Academy Transition High School-Columbus	Columbus	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	130	40.77%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School for Alternative Learners of Middletown	Middletown	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	92	54.35%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School - Dayton	Dayton	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	112	63.39%	Mead (2008); 2011–12 CRDC

School Name	City	State	Specific Disability	Total Enrollment	Enrollment of Students with Disabilities	Source
TWO OR MORE IDEA CATEGORIES (CONTINUED)						
Summit Academy Community School-Warren	Warren	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	109	65.14%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School - Painesville	Painesville	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	100	68.00%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy-Youngstown	Youngstown	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	178	68.54%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School-Columbus	Columbus	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	68	69.12%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School - Cincinnati	Cincinnati	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	133	69.17%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School for Alternative Learners	Canton	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	144	70.14%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Secondary School - Middletown	Middletown	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	91	74.73%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School Alternative Learners	Xenia	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	165	75.76%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Middle School - Columbus	Columbus	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	77	76.62%	2011-2012 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School-Toledo	Toledo	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	115	77.39%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Secondary - Canton	Canton	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	89	79.78%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Secondary - Youngstown	Youngstown	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	228	79.82%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School-Parma	Parma	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	205	80.00%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Akron Middle School	Akron	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	65	81.54%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Transition High School Dayton	Dayton	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	98	81.63%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Secondary - Lorain	Lorain	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	82	82.93%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Transition High School-Cincinnati	Cincinnati	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	99	83.84%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Alternative Learners Warren Middle & Secondary	Warren	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	112	84.82%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Middle School - Lorain	Lorain	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	93	86.02%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Community School Alternative Learners	Lorain	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	145	88.28%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Summit Academy Toledo Learning Center	Toledo	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	166	89.76%	2013-2014 CRDC
Summit Academy Akron Elementary School	Akron	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	129	89.92%	2013-2014 CRDC
Constellation Schools: Outreach Academy for Students with Disabilities	Mantua	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	37	94.59%	2011-2012 CRDC

School Name	City	State	Specific Disability	Total Enrollment	Enrollment of Students with Disabilities	Source
TWO OR MORE IDEA CATEGORIES (CONTINUED)						
Summit Academy Secondary - Akron	Akron	OH	Two or more IDEA Categories	82	97.56%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Oregon Virtual Academy	North Bend	OR	Two or more IDEA Categories	1678	34.27%	2013-2014 CRDC
Eola Hills Charter School	Amity	OR	Two or more IDEA Categories	44	38.64%	2013-2014 CRDC
Dr. Robert Ketterer Cs Inc.	Latrobe	PA	Two or more IDEA Categories	184	59.78%	2011-2012 CRDC
Spectrum Cs	Monroeville	PA	Two or more IDEA Categories	35	91.43%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Palmetto Youth Academy Charter	Kingstree	SC	Two or more IDEA Categories	31	54.84%	2011-2012 CRDC
Meyer Center for Special Children	Greenville	SC	Two or more IDEA Categories	44	93.18%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Humes Preparatory Upper Academy	Memphis	TN	Two or more IDEA Categories	371	26.42%	2013-2014 CRDC
Big Springs Charter School	Leakey	TX	Two or more IDEA Categories	90	28.89%	2011-2012 CRDC
Trinity Charter School	Canyon Lake	TX	Two or more IDEA Categories	72	52.78%	NCSECS Research
Trinity Charter School	Katy	TX	Two or more IDEA Categories	82	56.10%	NCSECS Research
John H Wood Jr. Charter School at San Marcos	San Marcos	TX	Two or more IDEA Categories	156	62.82%	2011-2012 CRDC
School of Excellence in Education - Rick Hawkins High School	San Antonio	TX	Two or more IDEA Categories	80	25.00%	2013-2014 CRDC
Ranch Academy - Tyler Campus	Canton	TX	Two or more IDEA Categories	38	73.68%	2013-2014 CRDC
TNC Campus (Texas Neuro-rehabilitation Center)	Austin	TX	Two or more IDEA Categories	74	79.73%	2013-2014 CRDC
Pinnacle Canyon Academy	Price	UT	Two or more IDEA Categories	522	25.67%	2013-2014 CRDC
Spectrum Academy - NSL	North Salt Lake City	UT	Two or more IDEA Categories	544	83.09%	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC
Albemarle County Community Public Charter	Charlottesville	VA	Two or more IDEA Categories	43	25.58%	2013-2014 CRDC
Sheboygan Area School District - Central High	Sheboygan	WI	Two or more IDEA Categories	210	26.67%	Wisconsin Charter Schools Yearbook 2016-17
School for Early Development and Achievement (SEDA)	Milwaukee	WI	Two or more IDEA Categories	82	31.71%	2013-2014 CRDC



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