

# A Secondary Analysis of the Civil Rights Data Collection to Inform Policy and Practice

Key Findings and Guiding Questions that Examine the Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Charter and Traditional Public Schools



The Center for Learner Equity (CLE) has analyzed the 2017-2018 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) released in 2020 to examine the experiences of students with disabilities in traditional and charter public schools.

## GOAL OF THE ANALYSIS

To inform educators, policymakers, and advocates and support more equitable decisions to educate students with disabilities, regardless of their educational setting

## AREAS OF FOCUS



### Enrollment

Proportion of students with disabilities receiving services due to eligibility under IDEA or Section 504

CLE studied similarities and differences between students with disabilities in charter and traditional public schools and how they have changed over time.



### Enrollment Characteristics

Characteristics of students with disabilities (i.e., disability type, gender, race, and English language learner)



### Educational Settings

Extent to which students with disabilities are educated in a general education classroom with their peers



### School Discipline

Rates of school discipline and engagement of law enforcement for students with disabilities relative to peers without disabilities



### Specialized Charter Schools

Growth and characteristics of charter schools specializing in educating students with disabilities

[VIEW THE FULL CRDC ANALYSIS AT CENTERFORLEARNEREQUITY.ORG.](https://centerforlearnerequity.org)



# KEY FINDINGS

1

The number of students qualifying for special education and related services continues to increase across the nation.

2

Charter schools continue to enroll a smaller proportion of students with disabilities and after a period of decreasing, the difference has increased.

3

The legal status of a charter school appears to influence the extent to which students with disabilities have access, most likely due to IDEA assigning responsibility for the provision of FAPE to districts and not schools.

4

Charter schools educate more students with disabilities in general education classrooms, but traditional public schools continue to educate more students with disabilities who are typically educated in more restrictive settings.

5

In both charter and traditional public schools, students with disabilities are subject to 2X to 3X more discipline (i.e., suspensions, seclusion, and restraint), leading to notably more involvement with law enforcement.

6

The sub-sample of “specialized” charter schools continues to grow but remains largely clustered in Florida, Ohio, and Texas.

## WHY DOES THIS DATA MATTER NOW?

*In light of the disruptions caused by COVID-19, families are reevaluating their school options to meet their children’s individual needs. As enrollment in public charter schools continues to grow, it’s critical that educators, policymakers, and charter school authorizers and funders continue to track how students with disabilities are accessing charter schools, their in-school experiences, and the factors that impact their ability to receive an equitable education comparable to their non-disabled peers - now and post-recovery.*

## KEY QUESTIONS



Why is the population of students who qualify to receive special education and related services increasing over time?



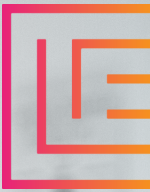
While the autonomy granted to charter schools led to improved outcomes for some groups of students, the CRDC data indicate it has not fostered notably different experiences for students with disabilities. How can we change that?



What factors are influencing the number and learning profile of students with disabilities enrolling in charter schools?



How can we build on this data to inform recovery?



The Center for  
Learner Equity

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