



# Key Trends in Special Education in Charter Schools:

A Secondary  
Analysis of the  
Civil Rights Data  
Collection 2011-2012

October 2015

Lauren Morando Rhim,  
Jesse Gumz, and  
Kelly Henderson



**NCSECS.ORG**

*National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools*

## 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 special education and related services in charter schools.

NCSECS is committed to 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 by proactively working with states, authorizers, charter school and special education advocates, as well as other stakeholders.

### **NCSECS's Mission**

To ensure that students with diverse learning needs are able to fully access and thrive 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 disabilities.

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## Acknowledgements

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## Foreword

The National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) is an independent, non-profit organization formed by a coalition of national experts on special education in charter schools. It is 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:

- Establish and Communicate Facts
- Inform Policy
- Build Bridges Between a Diverse Coalition of Stakeholders
- Identify and Foster the Creation of Models of Excellence

This report represents a key pillar of our effort to ***establish and communicate the facts*** about special education in charter schools. To date, much of the discussion regarding the extent to which charter schools serve students with disabilities has been driven by anecdotes and single cases. The purpose, historically, was to advance an agenda either for or against charter schools as a construct, as opposed to credible data or a commitment to ensuring that students with disabilities are guaranteed their right to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment in every public school across the country. Our secondary analysis of the Civil Rights Data Collection stands as the first comprehensive examination of the status of students with disabilities in charter schools compared to traditional public schools according to: enrollment; service provision; and, discipline; as well as an examination of the prevalence and focus of specialized charter schools. In conducting the respective analyses, our goal was to provide federal and state policy leaders 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 discernably benefit students with disabilities.

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



Lauren Morando Rhim, Ph.D.  
Executive Director and Co-Founder  
National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools



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# Executive Summary



## Findings

Scant information exists regarding the status of students with disabilities in the charter sector. While we have some understanding of several high-profile issues (e.g., enrollment gaps, counseling out, the provision of special education services, and growth of specialized charter schools), to date, little has been published to verify or disprove perceptions. With the release of the most recent U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) embraced the opportunity to examine these issues across the universe of states with charter schools. In conducting the analysis, we sought to provide policymakers and stakeholders with a more robust comparison between traditional public schools

and charter schools regarding key data points. Our aim in making the comparisons is to leverage data to inform the ongoing dialogue related to access and provision of services to students with disabilities in the growing charter sector. While it raises important questions that need to be explored in future analyses, this ground breaking research is a significant step forward for our field.

Following are highlights of key questions, findings, and recommendations for federal, state, and local policymakers.

**Enrollment:** What proportion of students enrolled in traditional and charter schools have a disability for which they receive 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 receiving special education across *all public schools* in the 2011-12 academic year was 12.47%.
- On average, students who receive special education support and related services made up 10.42% of total enrollment in charter schools, whereas traditional public schools had 12.55% of their total enrollment made up by students who received special education services.
- Students who qualify for Section 504 support made up 1.53% of all students at traditional public schools and 1.52% of all students in charter schools.

**Placement:** Where do students with disabilities spend their day?

- Charter schools place relatively more students with disabilities in *more inclusive settings* (within regular education classrooms) than do traditional public schools. More specifically, charter schools place



relatively more students with disabilities in high inclusion settings (i.e., 80% or more of the day in the regular education classroom) and relatively fewer students with disabilities in lower inclusion settings (i.e., 79% or less of the day in the regular education classroom).

- 84% of students with disabilities in charter schools were in the general education classroom for 80% or more of the day compared to 67% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools.
- 10% of students with disabilities in charter schools were in the regular education classroom between 40% and 79% of the day compared to 19% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools.
- 4% of students with disabilities in charter schools were in the regular education classroom for 39% or less of the day, compared to 12% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools.

**Suspension and Expulsion:** 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 similar.
  - A greater proportion of all students are suspended by charter schools than traditional public schools (7.40% vs. 6.88%).
  - In both charter and traditional schools, students with disabilities are suspended at a rate higher than the average suspension rate for all students (13.45% of students with disabilities vs. 7.40% of all students in charter schools and 13.40% of students with disabilities vs. 6.88% of all students in traditional public schools).
  - In both types of schools, approximately 13.4-13.5% of the students with disabilities had been given at least one suspension.
- 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 slightly higher rate* than traditional public schools.
  - In both charter and traditional schools, students with disabilities are expelled at a rate higher than the average expulsion rate for all students (0.55% of

students with disabilities vs. 0.25% of all students in charter schools and 0.46% of students with disabilities vs. 0.23% of all students in traditional public schools).

- Charter schools expel students with disabilities at a slightly higher rate than traditional public schools do (0.55% vs. 0.46%).

**Specialized charter schools:** How relevant are specialized charter schools (defined as charter schools with 25% or more enrollment by students with disabilities that self-identify as “special education schools” and/or schools that report that 50% or more of their students qualify for special education)? Such schools serve students across the entire disability spectrum. NCSECS verified the existence of 115 charter schools that focused primarily or entirely on students with disabilities. Of these 115, only 99 had enrollment data available within the CRDC.

- About 57% 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 49 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 — 77% on average — compared to the national average of 12.4%. The average proportion of students with disabilities is lower in specialized charter schools than it is in specialized traditional public schools: 77% vs. 84%.

### Snap Shot Comparisons

Data Point	Traditional Public Schools	Charter Schools
Enrollment of students with disabilities (K-12)	12.55%	10.42%
Placement of students with disabilities in general education 100% of the day	67%	84%
Suspension of students with disabilities	13.40%	13.45%
Expulsion of students with disabilities	0.46%	0.55%

Notes:

1. The national average of enrollment of students receiving special education across all public schools was 12.47%.
2. A student with a disability is defined as a student receiving special education or related services for the purposes of this chart.
3. Due to privacy protections, dataset has greater representation of larger schools for both types of schools.

## Discussion

The CRDC data confirm an ongoing enrollment gap of students with disabilities in charter schools relative to traditional public schools but when compared to prior research, appear to indicate that the gap is decreasing. For instance, the U.S. General Accountability Office (GAO) found that in 2008-2009, the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools compared to traditional public schools was 7.7% to 11.3%, respectively. Based on data reported by the GAO in 2009-2010, 8.2% of all students enrolled at charter schools were students with disabilities, compared to 11.2% observed in traditional public schools. Our secondary analysis of 2011-2012 data found those proportions have changed to 10.42% and 12.55%, respectively. The gap in percentages has been dropping over time: 3.6%, 3%, and most recently 2.13%. There remains significant variation at the state level, and presumably also within states themselves.

Once students with disabilities enroll in charter schools, the CRDC confirms perceptions that charter schools are serving students *in less restrictive settings* (i.e., they spend a greater proportion of their day in the regular education classroom with their peers). However, these descriptive data do not shed light on whether charter schools are serving students with the same level of needs *in different settings* or if charter schools are serving students *with different needs*. Additional research examining enrollment trends *by disability type* is required to more thoroughly understand the implications of the service provision data. The discipline data confirm that students with disabilities are disproportionately disciplined in both types of schools but appear to challenge perceptions that charter schools discipline students with disabilities notably more than traditional district schools. Regardless of school type, the discipline data are disconcerting given the significant protections in place and the long-term negative impact of discipline on at-risk-students. Finally, the data related to specialized charter schools, long a concern of special education advocates given implications for efforts to educate students in the least restrictive environment, confirm that these schools are a small niche of the broader charter sector but apparently less segregated (i.e., fewer schools are 100% students with disabilities) than similar schools in the traditional system.

## Policy Recommendations

Our secondary analysis of the CRDC significantly advances the discussion regarding the status of special education in the charter sector but work remains to be done to ensure that students with disabilities are positioned to benefit from the autonomies extended to charter schools. Based on our analyses of the data and experience working in the field of special education in charter schools, we propose the following recommendations for federal, state, and local policy makers and practitioners:

### Federal

- The U.S. DOE's National Center for Education Statistics and Office for Civil Rights should continue to support and improve large-scale data collection efforts, such as the CRDC, and secondary analyses of these large data sets and provide detailed information about methodological details such as privacy protection decision rules to optimize analyses and identify information critical to development of sound policy at the federal and state level.
- The USDOE should connect key datasets such as the CRDC and IDEA indicators reported as part of the Results Driven Accountability to facilitate correlational analyses that may provide insights into how key traditional public as well as charter schools' policies and practices influence outcomes for students with disabilities.
- The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and Office of Innovation and Improvement in the USDOE should collaborate to identify mutual interests and facilitate development of guidance that support students with disabilities accessing charter schools and development of quality special education programs within these schools.



## State

- Leveraging the data published by the CRDC, state education agencies (SEAs) should annually track and report data regarding special education enrollment, service provision, discipline rates, and academic outcomes as leading indicators of the extent to which students with disabilities are accessing and succeeding in charter schools. In instances where schools are determined to be outside an acceptable range to be identified by the SEA, actions should be taken to ensure students with disabilities are not being discriminated against when seeking access to or services in charter schools.
- SEAs should periodically review state policies and authorizing practices relative to their impact on recruitment, admission and retention practices, especially in states experiencing notable differences in the enrollment of students with disabilities in traditional and charter public schools. Such examination and review will help SEAs better understand why major differences in enrollment exist.

## Local

- Authorizers should examine charter school discipline policies and procedures, including the need for personnel training to help support development of charter school culture that is focused on providing a safe and positive learning environment for all.
- Authorizers should rigorously monitor indicators of their charter schools' performance in providing a free appropriate public education to all students with disabilities and nondisabled peers, in line with the intent and mandates of IDEA, Section 504, and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).
- Charter schools should ensure they understand their legal status as either an independent local education agency (LEA) or part of an existing LEA and the respective responsibilities articulated under ESEA, the IDEA and Section 504 related to access and provision of special education and related services.

## Conclusions

In the aggregate, the data from the CRDC confirm that students with disabilities are enrolling in charter schools, but there appears to be evidence there is room to improve access. When considered across the universe of schools, it does seem reasonable to expect that roughly 12% of the students enrolling in charter schools would be eligible for special education. However, some states or districts report that 15–18% of students qualify for special education. Given that identification decisions may be subjective, historic concerns about over-identifying students for special education, and that some state funding systems provide incentives to identify students as having a disability, closing the apparent enrollment gap at the local level is not necessarily a universal goal. Rather, the goal should be to ensure that charter schools not only welcome students with disabilities in line with federal civil right statutes but that they also operate robust programs that enable all students to succeed, including students with a diverse array of disabilities. Future analyses of enrollment, service provision, discipline, and specialized school trends, along with explorations of other key data points, such as enrollment by disability type and performance outcomes, will further inform and catalyze efforts to guarantee access.



# Introduction



The charter school concept emerged from a deep commitment on the part of parents and educators to providing a high quality and equitable education to all students. However, so far the charter sector has arguably not fulfilled its potential when it comes to enrolling and developing innovative and exemplary programs for students with disabilities.

On average, charter schools enroll fewer students with disabilities than do traditional public schools and have generally not invested adequate resources in developing exemplary or innovative programs for students with disabilities. Furthermore, charter school authorizers have generally not prioritized access to services and assessment of the quality of services available to students with disabilities in their policies or practices. While exceptions to these generalizations can be found in places such as Los Angeles, New Orleans and Washington, DC, these have largely been driven by threats in the form of lawsuits and civil rights complaints. As the charter sector continues to grow and collectively become a larger component of the broader public education system, federal and state policy makers as well as authorizers and individual charter school operators must increase their investment in providing special education and related services for the sector to be viable.

To date, much of the discussion regarding access to charter schools and the provision of services to students with disabilities has been based on single case or state-specific anecdotes. To inform policymaking and school-level and authorizer-level practice, more robust data are required.

In order to better understand the special education landscape in both charter and traditional public schools, the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) sought a way to obtain a more credible national quantitative perspective. Key variables of interest included: total enrollment, enrollment by student disability category by type of school, provision of special education and related services, discipline information, and school

specialization. The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) of the United States Department of Education (USDOE) provides the field with access to data regarding these variables. In this report, we present a secondary analysis of these data via a collection of descriptive statistics on five aspects of special education in traditional public schools and in charter schools across the nation.

## Civil Rights Data Collection

The CRDC is a large data set compiled by the USDOE's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). As described by the USDOE: 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."<sup>1</sup>

The USDOE administers the CRDC survey every other school year. Our secondary analysis reflects data collected during the 2011-12 school year, the most recent for which data are available. In 2011-12, the CRDC surveyed the entire universe of public schools in the U.S. (rather than a sample of schools) for the first time. Released in the spring of 2014, the 2011-12 CRDC provides the most recent and comprehensive data set regarding the U.S. public education system to date.<sup>2</sup> For the 2011-12 collection, the response rate was 98.3% for school districts and 99.2% for individual schools.<sup>3</sup> The different response rates arise from varying processes of data collection. Some data in the CRDC was

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/data.html> (accessed July 31, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *Overview*. Retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Overview> (accessed July 31, 2015).

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (personal communication (e-mail), June 10, 2015).

gathered at the district level, while other data came directly from schools themselves.

The CRDC includes data regarding the enrollment of students with disabilities and the provision of specialized supports and services to students who are eligible for services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504). The data set also differentiates by school type (e.g., non-charter or traditional public schools, charter, magnet, special education-focused), providing a unique opportunity to compare traditional public schools to public charter schools nationwide.

Although conducting an analysis of these data was not without challenges (e.g., some traditional and charter schools did not provide certain data or data was masked due to privacy concerns), *it is unique and valuable in that over time it will provide a picture of national trends for both types of schools (traditional and charter) on key variables.* Keeping in mind its limitations, we found the dataset provided credible information worth secondary analysis. For more details regarding the data set and specific decisions made in the process of conducting the secondary analysis, see Appendix A.

## Federal Statutes Articulating the Rights of Students with Disabilities

The rights of students with disabilities in the United States are outlined and protected under three key federal statutes:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Data compiled in the CRDC are used in part to assess the extent to which states are meeting the obligations outlined in these statutes.

### Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973<sup>4</sup>

Section 504 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, and defines the rights of individuals with disabilities to have access to

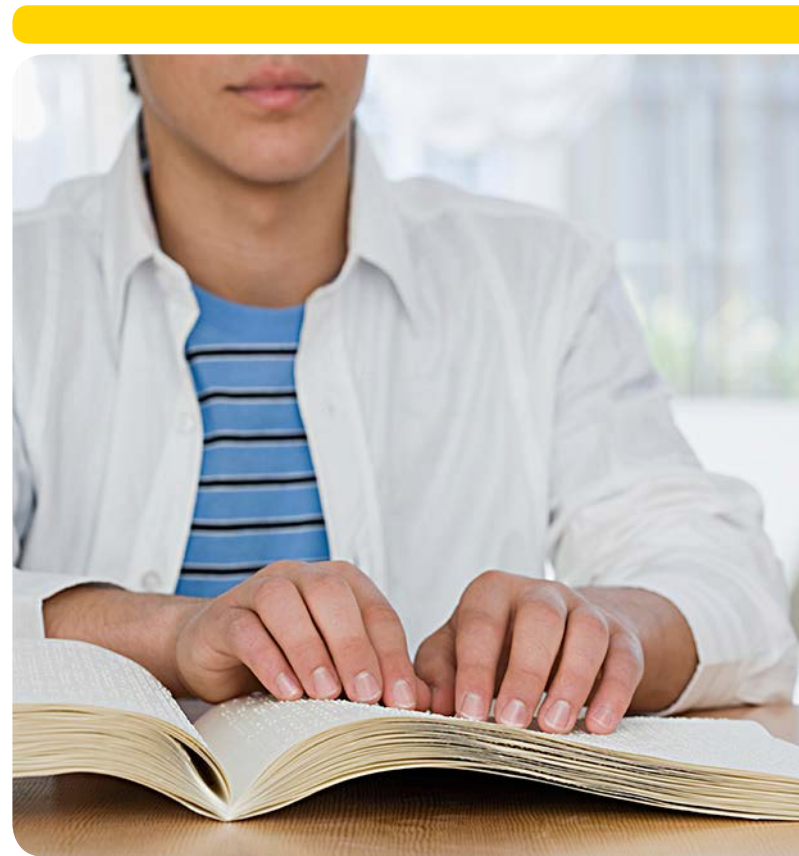
<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights. *Your Rights Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/factsheets/504.pdf> (accessed July 31, 2015); U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *Protecting Students with Disabilities: Frequently Asked Questions About Section 504 and the Education of Children with Disabilities*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html?exp=0> (accessed July 31, 2015).

the benefits and services of programs that receive federal funds. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is the federal USDOE office that enforces Section 504.

Section 504 requires that school districts provide a “free, appropriate public education” (FAPE) to students who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. For students who are eligible for services under the IDEA, the protections of Section 504 are already covered by the IDEA. However, students who are not eligible under one or more of the disability categories of the IDEA may be able to receive accommodations for issues such as severe asthma, learning problems and others. If a child qualifies for accommodations under this law, a Section 504 plan must be developed that specifies the accommodations to be provided.

### Americans with Disabilities Act<sup>5</sup>

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) is another federal civil rights statute; for the purposes of public education, it is very similar to Section 504 (e.g., both



<sup>5</sup>U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. *ADA Standards for Accessible Design*. Retrieved from [http://www.ada.gov/2010ADAstandards\\_index.htm](http://www.ada.gov/2010ADAstandards_index.htm) (accessed July 31, 2015).

programs are overseen by the OCR using the same set of regulations). The reach of the ADA is even broader than that of Section 504, since it is not limited to recipients of federal funds. Title II of the ADA applies to public entities; Title III applies to private entities (referred to by the ADA as public accommodations). Like Section 504, the ADA ensures physical access to facilities. It protects against architectural barriers and ensures program accessibility.



## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)<sup>6</sup>

The IDEA codifies due process protections outlined in federal case law and expressed in Section 504 and the ADA, and provides a federal funding stream to help states provide services to students with disabilities.<sup>7</sup> In essence, the IDEA is a grant program that provides special education funds to states in return for compliance with the law's requirements. The IDEA identifies 13 disability categories for which the numbers of students served are reported. The law assigns State Education Agencies (SEAs) responsibility for ensuring the appropriate provision of special education and related services to students who qualify for such assistance. The law stipulates that school districts are Local Education Agencies (LEAs), which in turn become the entry points for students with disabilities to access special education and related services.

Charter schools may operate as LEAs or as part of an existing LEA. This designation determines the scope of their obligations to fulfill the responsibilities for students with disabilities outlined in the IDEA.<sup>8</sup> Charters that are their own LEAs are solely and entirely responsible for upholding the responsibilities outlined in the IDEA, whereas charter schools that operate as part of an external LEA share the responsibilities with the other schools in that LEA and its central office.

One of the key responsibilities described in both Section 504 and the IDEA is that all students with disabilities be given the right to a FAPE in the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate for each student's needs. In essence, this clause means that students with disabilities should be placed in as inclusive an educational environment as possible, depending on the severity of their disabilities and that this placement is at no cost to the student.

In this report, the term "students with disabilities" will refer to those students who qualify for IDEA benefits. In order to differentiate these students from those students who qualify for Section 504 coverage, the term "Section 504" will be used specifically in the descriptions for that second group of students (e.g., "students who qualify for Section 504 support").

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Department of Education. *Building the Legacy of IDEA*. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov> (accessed July 31, 2015).

<sup>7</sup>Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Pub. L. No. 94-142, 89 Stat. 773; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. *Thirty-five Years of Progress in Educating Children with Disabilities through IDEA: Public Law 94-142*. Retrieved from [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/idea35/history/index\\_pg10.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/idea35/history/index_pg10.html).

<sup>8</sup>Except in rare instances where state law limits the scope of a charter school's obligation, and assigns certain LEA responsibilities to the local district.



## Methodology Overview

The CRDC presented a unique opportunity to analyze special education data at both the national and state levels. The comprehensive nature of the data set meant that several variables of interest, (e.g., enrollment figures and school type), were accessible for secondary analyses.

The CRDC does have certain methodological limitations. In some cases, enrollment numbers were concealed by the USDOE to protect the privacy of students. Consequently, some schools had incomplete information. In other cases, there were apparent errors in the numbers, such as percentages of enrollment that totaled over 100% or incorrect school type classifications (e.g., a school categorized as a charter school in a state that does not have a charter school law). Due to the magnitude of the dataset, we were not able to verify the accuracy of all the data. However, we did investigate outliers and data points that appeared to lack face validity (e.g., a school in Virginia that reportedly enrolled 373 students, of which 98.7% were students with disabilities; we called the school to verify the data and determined that the school was a magnet school that had been incorrectly coded as a charter school and that the special education enrollment data were incorrect).

In spite of these limitations, we determined that the CRDC was valuable in that it is nationally representative and therefore provides a unique foundation for future analyses and comparisons. The data collection uses standardized metrics across all schools in all states, a feature which was invaluable for the analyses we wanted to perform. Furthermore, we exercised caution in “cleaning” the data and obtaining a viable sample of schools. In general, we removed records that had incomplete information. The number of schools removed and the reasons for their removal (e.g., privacy protection or incompleteness) depended upon what variables we were looking at; not

all of the analyses used data from the same files. Further details on the data processing are included in the in-depth analysis and Appendix A.<sup>9</sup> Our goal in establishing rules for including and excluding data was to ensure total transparency so that our methods could be readily examined and replicated by others.

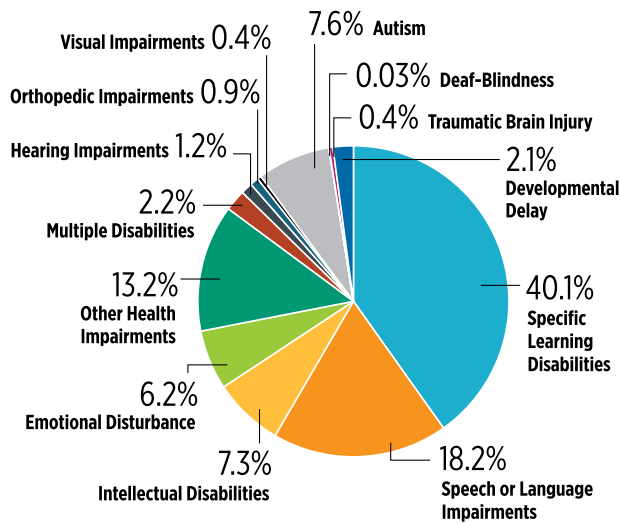
After separating a sample with concrete data for students with disabilities in the main enrollment analysis (i.e., the first analysis presented in this report), we performed some hypothesis testing to see if the sample we had obtained was significantly different from the schools that were filtered out. According to the tests, which evaluated any differences between the school groups based on total enrollment figures — these numbers were used because they were not privacy-protected — our sample was found to be significantly different. It appeared that the sample of traditional and charter public schools represented schools that had larger enrollment totals on average. Since privacy-protected data occur when the number of students with disabilities is two or below for either gender, it follows that smaller schools with lower enrollment totals might be more likely to have privacy-protection.

Given the difference in average enrollment size between our sample and the schools we excluded from our analysis, it is important to acknowledge the potential presence of bias in the results of this report. That is, the results might be more relevant to larger traditional public schools and larger charter schools. In each analysis, however, 80% or more of traditional public schools and 60% or more of charter schools were represented. Thus, the analyses in this report do reference a majority in both school groups.

Even though the sample of verifiable, non-privacy-protected data is used, it is important to acknowledge that the missing schools might merit separate research. Why

<sup>9</sup>As a reference, there were 90,322 traditional public schools and 5,300 charter schools in the CRDC. The number of students was 47,714,795 at traditional public schools and 2,036,556 at charter schools.

### Percent of students ages 6 to 21 receiving special education services in 2013



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, ED Facts Data Warehouse (EDW), OMB # 1875-240: "IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Collection," 2012. These data are for the 50 states, DC, BIE schools, PR, the four outlying areas, and the three freely associated states. Data were accessed fall 2013. For actual data used, go to <http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep>.

is it, for instance, that a greater portion of charter schools appears to have very low enrollment percentages of students with disabilities?

Without knowing the exact numbers behind the privacy-protected values (e.g., does a value of "less than or equal to two" on average represent a value of zero, one or two?), we decided that for the other analyses, similar to the initial enrollment analysis, we would only include records with complete data. While this sample may introduce some bias toward larger schools in both sectors (as suggested by the results shown in Tables 3 and 4), the number of schools represented in the samples of the analyses does make up a majority for both school groups.

### Children with disabilities are identified as having 1 of 13 categories of disabilities:

- **specific learning disabilities**
- **speech or language impairments**
- **other health impairments**
- **autism**
- **cognitive impairment**
- **emotional disturbance**
- **multiple disabilities**
- **developmental delay**
- **hearing impairments**
- **orthopedic impairments**
- **traumatic brain injury**
- **visual impairments**
- **deaf-blindness**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education. 36th Annual report to congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (2014). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved October 1 from: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2014/parts-b-c/36th-idea-arc.pdf>





## Detailed Findings

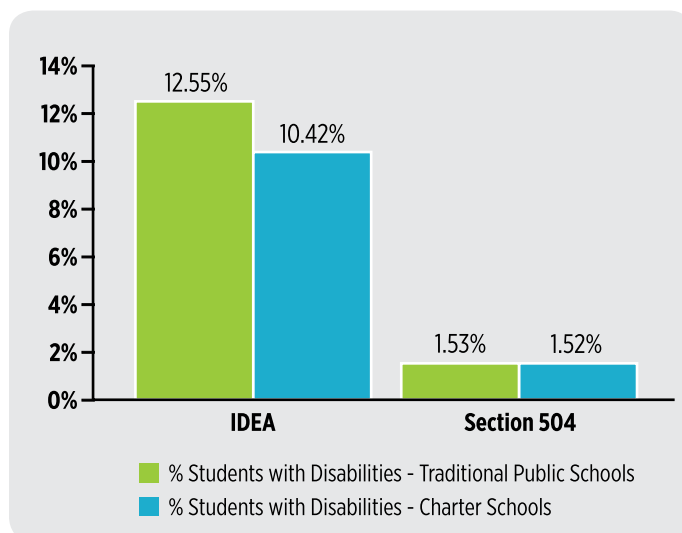
The following sections cover the five core aspects of the secondary analysis:

- enrollment of students with disabilities in traditional public and charter schools
- enrollment by categories of grades offered at schools
- provision of special education and related services
- discipline of students with disabilities, and
- identification of specialized charter schools

### Enrollment of Students with Disabilities in Charter Schools

The rates of enrollment of students with disabilities in charter schools compared to traditional public schools have received a great deal of attention from researchers, the press and practitioners alike.<sup>10</sup> For our inquiry, we conducted a secondary analysis of the CRDC data related to total enrollment, the enrollment of students with disabilities eligible to receive special education and related services, and the enrollment of students who qualified for supports and services under Section 504 relative to traditional public schools.

- On average, charter schools enroll proportionally fewer students with disabilities than are enrolled at traditional public schools (10.42% in charter schools vs. 12.55% in traditional public schools in 2011–2012, as shown in Figure 1).<sup>11</sup>
- Across states, the size of this gap varies. The smallest gap was observed in Pennsylvania (15.11% in charter schools vs. 15.23% in traditional public schools). The largest gap was observed in Oklahoma (8.57% in charter schools vs. 14.95% in traditional public schools).
- On average, charter schools and traditional public schools enroll nearly the same proportion of students



**Figure 1. Percentage of Total Enrollment of Students with Disabilities Who Qualify for Special Education or Section 504 Plans by School Type**

<sup>10</sup>See for example: New York City Independent Budget Office. (2015, January) *Comparing Student Attrition Rates at Charter Schools and Nearby Traditional Public Schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2015schoolattrition.pdf> (accessed July 31, 2015); Winters, M. A. (2013, September). *Why the Gap? Special Education and New York City Charter Schools*. Retrieved from [http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/CRPE\\_report\\_speced\\_gap-nyc-charters\\_sept13.pdf](http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/CRPE_report_speced_gap-nyc-charters_sept13.pdf) (accessed July 31, 2015); and Rubin, J. S., & Weber, M. (2014, October 29). *New Jersey Charter Schools: A Data-Driven View, Part 1*. Retrieved from [http://www.saveourschoolsnj.org/save/corefiles/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/NJ-Charter-School-Report\\_10.29.2014.pdf](http://www.saveourschoolsnj.org/save/corefiles/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/NJ-Charter-School-Report_10.29.2014.pdf) (accessed July 31, 2015).

<sup>11</sup>The National Center for Education Statistics identifies 12.9% of students in public schools receive special education services (NCES: <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64>). The data from CRDC identifies a lower percentage (i.e., 12.47%). This could be caused by a variety of factors associated with who is surveyed for both data collection efforts and what schools are included. For the purposes of our discussion, we limited our comparison to data collected by the CRDC with the assumption being that any differences between NCES and CRDC data collection procedures would apply to both traditional and charter public schools alike.

who qualify for Section 504 accommodations (1.52% in charter schools and 1.53% in traditional public schools).

Tables 1 and 2 show different sample sizes for the two groups. Due to removing schools that had privacy-protected data, the number of schools reporting students served under the IDEA was smaller than the number of schools reporting students served under Section 504.<sup>12</sup> For the group of students who were eligible to receive special education and related services under the IDEA<sup>13</sup> the total number of students enrolled in charter schools was 1,861,556. Of these students, 193,928 (10.42%) were qualified to receive special education and related services under the IDEA. The total number of students in traditional public schools was 46,649,099; 5,853,574 (12.55%) of them were qualified for special education and related services.

For the students who were qualified to receive services and supports under Section 504, the total number of students in charter schools is 2,036,556; 30,910 (1.52%) of them were qualified for Section 504 benefits. The total number of students in traditional public schools was 47,711,118. Of these students, 729,230 (1.53%) qualified for Section 504 benefits.

**Table 1. School Type and Enrollment, IDEA**

Type of School	Count of Schools	Total Students with Disabilities (IDEA)	Total Enrollment	Percent of Students with Disabilities (IDEA) of Total Enrollment
Traditional Public	81,881	5,853,574	46,649,099	12.55%
Charter	4,198	193,928	1,861,556	10.42%
Grand Total	86,079	6,047,502	48,510,655	12.47%

**Table 2. School Type and Enrollment, Section 504**

Type of School	Count of Schools	Total Students with Disabilities (Section 504)	Total Enrollment	Percent of Students with Disabilities (Section 504) of Total Enrollment
Traditional Public	90,314	729,230	47,711,118	1.53%
Charter	5,300	30,910	2,036,556	1.52%
Grand Total	95,614	760,140	49,747,674	1.53%

<sup>12</sup>Using the schools in the sample of data that contains complete records for IDEA enrollment, the percentages of enrollment for students with disabilities covered by Section 504 are 1.55% and 1.54% for charter schools and traditional public schools, respectively.

<sup>13</sup>The IDEA group's size differs because of the smaller number of schools that had complete data regarding IDEA enrollment. Since Section 504 data were more available, more schools were counted.

## Analysis of Potential Impact of Decisions Associated with Protecting Student Privacy

In an effort to better understand what the enrollment of students with disabilities might have been at the schools excluded from the sample, NCSECS performed some checks on the data. Given that privacy protection only occurred for values of two or less, different possibilities for the enrollment at the removed schools were generated using values of 0, 1, and 2. The first list for possible students with disabilities enrollment replaced privacy-protected values with zeroes, the second list replaced the masked values with ones, and the third list replaced the masked values with twos. Through examining all three lists, a hypothetical range of values for the relative enrollment of students with disabilities could be constructed.<sup>14</sup> Table 3 shows the proportions of students with disabilities for excluded charter schools and excluded traditional public schools.

The percentages in Table 4 of included and excluded schools with the three potential values are lower than the percentages found in our samples with published data.

**Table 3. Percentages of Students with Disabilities – Excluded Schools**

Type of School	Percentage of Students with Disabilities Enrolled		
	List 1 - Zeroes replace privacy-protected values	List 2 - Ones replace privacy-protected values	List 3 - Twos replace privacy-protected values
Traditional Public	3.77%	4.91%	6.05%
Charter	2.99%	3.87%	4.74%
Overall	3.66%	4.76%	5.86%

**Table 4. Percentages of Students with Disabilities – Excluded and Included Schools**

Type of School	Percentage of Students with Disabilities Enrolled		
	List 1 - Zeroes replace privacy-protected values	List 2 - Ones replace privacy-protected values	List 3 - Twos replace privacy-protected values
Traditional Public	12.33%	12.36%	12.38%
Charter	9.73%	9.81%	9.89%
Overall	12.22%	12.25%	12.28%

<sup>14</sup>There were cases in which values greater than zero were not substituted for privacy-protected values. For instance, if a school's enrollment total for one gender was zero, then the IDEA enrollment value for that gender was automatically replaced with a zero.



The percentages for charter schools in particular appear to fall by about 0.53–0.69% from the 10.42% figure shown in Table 1. Even though the exact number of students with disabilities cannot be known among the schools that were removed from the original sample, Lists 1–3 show that the excluded charter schools likely have notably smaller relative proportions of students with disabilities. For that reason, the percentages of students with disabilities at charter schools overall are lower in this case. It is possible then that the sample with no privacy protection obtained from the CRDC is biased upwards, in that it shows higher figures than it would if we could include all schools. The enrollment percentages for students with disabilities at traditional public schools do not appear to be affected at a similar level, although there are signs of a decrease (a drop of about 0.17–0.22% relative to the 12.55% figure in Table 1).

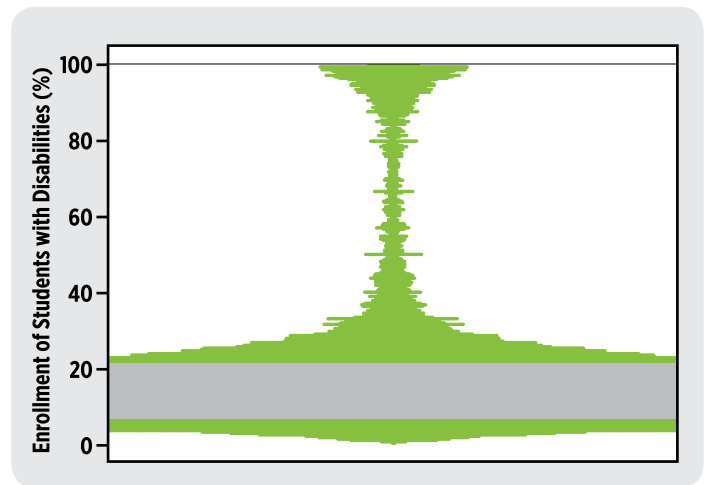
The excluded traditional public schools show a greater range (3.77–6.05% vs. 2.99–4.74% in charter schools) of enrollment percentages and also appear to have higher enrollment percentages in each list, in comparison to the excluded charter schools. Through examining the lists and their enrollment figures individually across the two school groups, it seems that the removed schools in general were ones that have a much lower relative enrollment of students with disabilities. Since the excluded schools had lower enrollment percentages of students with disabilities relative to the schools included in the main sample, NCSECS took a closer look at the included schools. The goal was to better understand the distribution of schools at different parts of the enrollment percentage spectrum.

### Variation of Enrollment

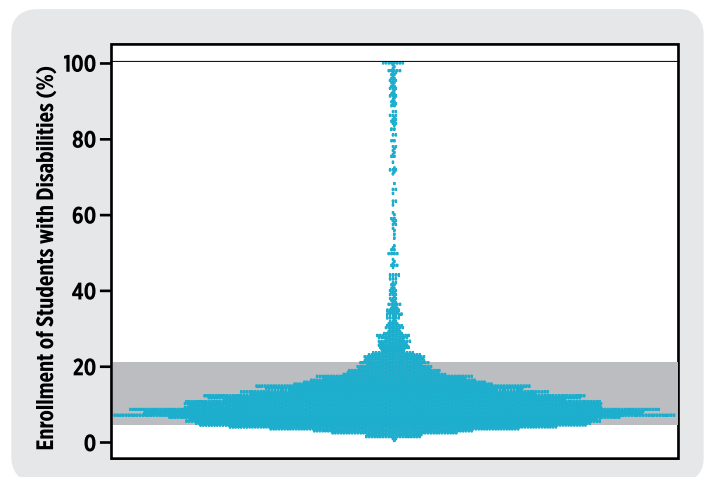
In addition to collecting key summary statistics, we sought to better understand the dispersion of schools based on their enrollment percentages of students with disabilities. Plotting each school revealed some trends, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. For one, charter and traditional public schools have a majority<sup>15</sup> or more of their schools in a range that stretches from 4–22%. For traditional public schools, the 10–90 percentile range corresponded to values of 7.02% and 21.37%. For charter schools, the same percentile range corresponded to values of 4.69% and 21.04%. Therefore, charter schools show a greater degree of spread because of the smaller lower bound number (4.69% vs. the 7.02% lower bound for traditional public schools). The greater spread likely contributes to a smaller average enrollment of students with disabilities when compared to traditional public schools. More details about the statistics of these ranges follow Table 5.

<sup>15</sup>The majority refers to the 80% of schools in the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile range. The gray bands in the figures show this range.

The shapes of the two school types’ distributions are similar, although it appears that traditional public schools fill the 10–90 percentile range more fully than do charter schools. Charter schools populate the bottom part of the range more heavily. Again, the lower average enrollment of students with disabilities for charter schools in the 10–90 percentile range might be explained by the grouping of schools near small percentages observed at the bottom of the range. Aside from the majority of schools being located in a similar range, a small number of schools—the upper



**Figure 2. Variation of Enrollment in Traditional Public Schools\***



**Figure 3. Variation of Enrollment in Charter Public Schools\***

*\*Note regarding Figures 2 and 3: Each circle represents a school. Since many schools are clustered together in different areas, many circles may overlap. The gray band identifies a range of data points that are between the 10th and 90th percentiles of each school group’s distribution of enrollment percentages.*

**Table 5. Percentiles of Enrollment Percentages of Students with Disabilities**

Percentile	Enrollment of Students with Disabilities Percentage	
	Traditional Public Schools	Charter Schools
10%	7.02%	4.69%
20%	8.62%	6.21%
30%	9.92%	7.45%
40%	11.11%	8.65%
50%	12.33%	9.97%
60%	13.65%	11.56%
70%	15.21%	13.27%
80%	17.39%	15.72%
90%	21.37%	21.04%

10%—in both groups appear to stretch to 100%, meaning that they predominately serve students with disabilities. Table 5 shows a breakdown of several percentiles in the 10–90 range so that the two school groups can be more closely compared.

Taking a closer look at the 10–90 percentile ranges observed in Figures 2 and 3, there are some characteristics to be noted. The mean for the 65,511 traditional public schools in the 10–90 percentile range is 12.34%, and the median is 12.33%. The 3,358 charter schools in the 10–90 percentile range have a mean of 10.21% and a median of 9.97%. For each school group, the distribution of schools within the selected percentile range is not skewed greatly in one direction or another. However, as noted before, the mean is smaller for charter schools than it is for traditional public schools. As seen in Table 5, charter schools only begin to cross into enrollment percentages at 10% or above at around the 50th percentile, whereas traditional public schools do so at the 30th percentile. The implication then is that there are relatively more charter schools with percentages of enrollment below 10% than there are traditional public schools.

The values corresponding to different percentiles in Table 5 reveal more about the relationship between the schools that were in the enrollment sample and the ones that were excluded. For instance, when the excluded schools had their missing values replaced with twos, the following average percentages of enrollment were found for students with disabilities: 6.05% for traditional public schools and 4.74% for charter schools. In the context of the main sample of schools, these two figures would correspond to percentiles of 5–6% and 10–11%, respectively. In the excluded school

group, however, these two figures correspond to percentiles of 35–36% and 41–42%, respectively.

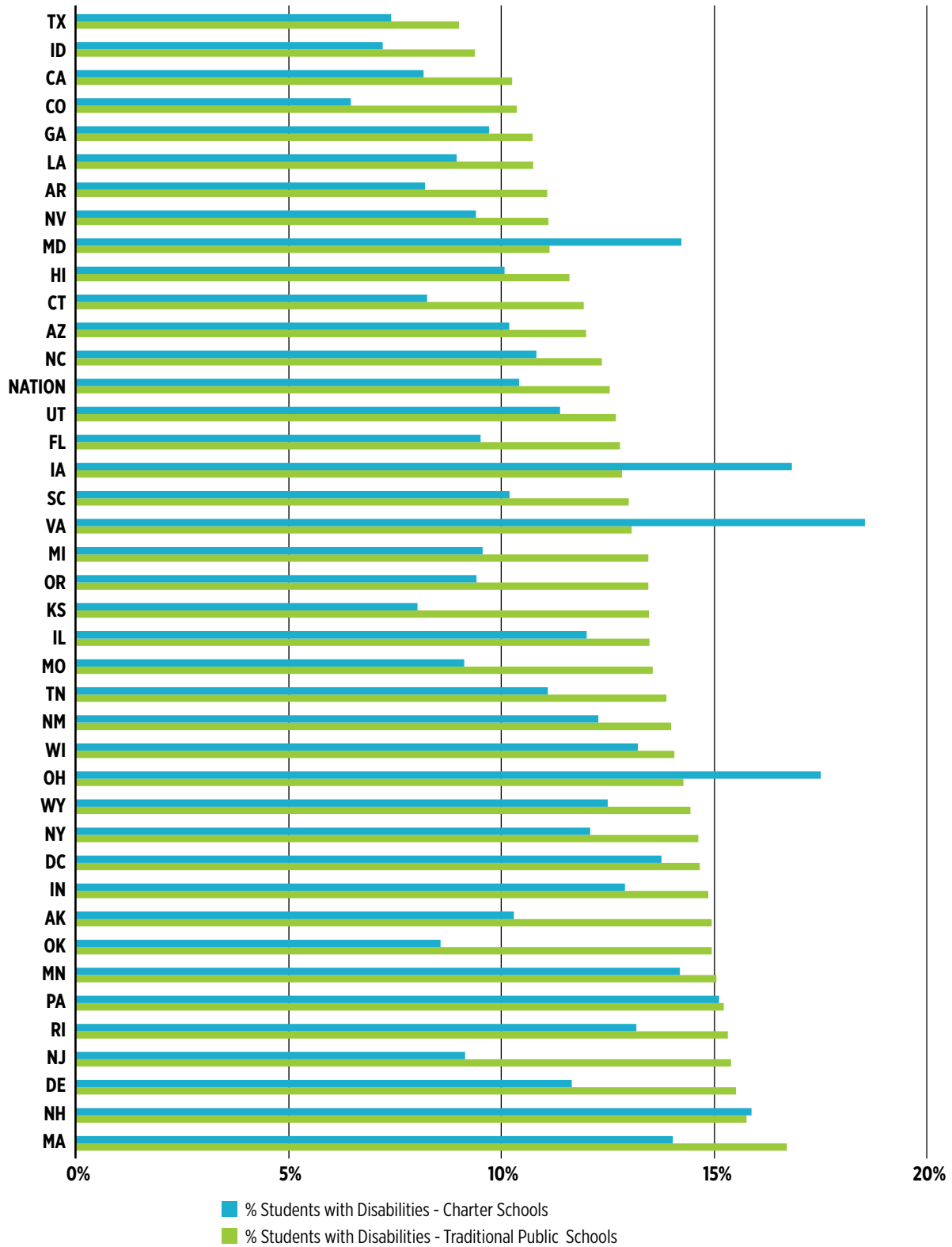
The two values cut off relatively small portions of the schools in the main sample, compared to the excluded group. It appears then that even if all of the excluded schools did indeed have twos for missing values, many of those schools would fall into the bottom 10% or less of schools in the main sample. This finding suggests that the schools in the main sample could be distributed differently from the excluded schools. Again, without knowing the exact number of students with disabilities enrolled in the excluded schools, it is difficult to make a definitive conclusion.

Compared to the graph for charter schools, the traditional public schools graph shows evidence of greater clustering near 100%.<sup>16</sup> In the charter schools graph there is some clustering near 100%, but it is less dense. There are 1,413 traditional public schools that have 90% or more students with disabilities enrolled. 1,294 of those 1,413 schools self-identify as special education-focused schools in the CRDC. For charter schools, the situation is similar, albeit at a smaller scale: there are 43 charter schools with 90% or more enrollment by students with disabilities, and 38 of those 43 charter schools are ones that are marked as special education-focused schools in the CRDC. As more charter schools open and more existing charter schools continue to experience new student demographics, seeing how the two distributions will change and compare will be relevant to the discussion about the provision of special education in the two groups of public schools.

### State Variation in Enrollment

The overall national averages mask notable variation across the country in both types of schools. Given that some state policies may facilitate or hinder the access of students with disabilities to charter schools (e.g., state charter or special education funding formulas and legal status as either an LEA or part of an LEA), it is a worthwhile exercise to examine the trends by states (i.e., 40 states and Washington, DC with charter schools in 2011–12). Although the national average for enrollment of students with disabilities in traditional public schools in the CRDC data is 12.47%, 27 states have enrollment percentages above this average and 13 states have enrollment percentages below this average, as shown in Figure 4.

<sup>16</sup>NCSECS determined that some schools had erroneous enrollment percentages of over 100%. The enrollment numbers were adjusted in order to ensure that no school had a percentage above 100%. Please see Appendix A—Schools with Percentages of Enrollment by Students with Disabilities over 100% for details on why the erroneous numbers appeared and how they were adjusted.



**Figure 4. State-by-State Percentages of Enrollment of Students with Disabilities, 2011-2012**

Note: AL, KY, ME, MS, MT, NE, ND, SD, VT, WA, WV are not represented since they only had traditional public schools in the 2011-2012 academic year. Please see Table A6 in the Appendix A. It contains the corresponding percentages for each state, along with the differences in the percentages by state.

Comparing the enrollment percentages of charter and traditional public schools by state, we found that there are 31 states in which the average enrollment percentage of students with disabilities is higher by more than 1% in traditional public schools:

- AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, KS, LA, MA, MI, MO, NC, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OK, OR, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, and WY.

There are five states in which the average enrollment percentages between traditional public schools and charter schools differ by less than 1%:

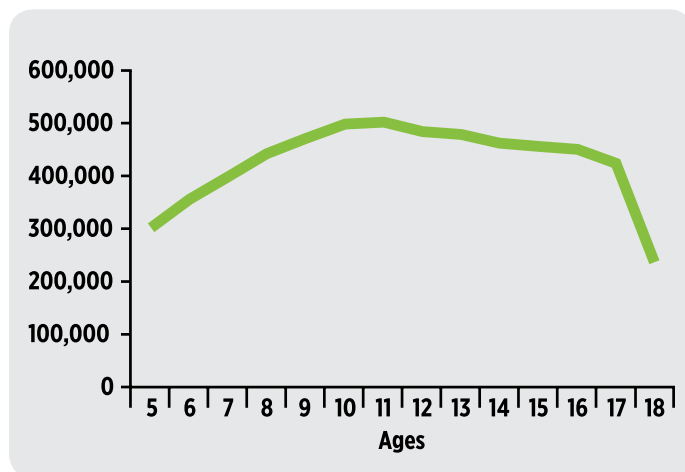
- DC, MN, NH, PA, and WI.

Lastly, there are four states in which the average enrollment percentage is higher by more than 1% in charter schools:

- ID, OH, MD, and VA.

### Grade Profiles of Charter and Traditional Public Schools

The proportion of students identified as having a disability is not a constant across grades K-12 (See Figure 5). Rather, historic enrollment trends indicate that identification of specific disabilities changes over time.<sup>17</sup> For instance, students identified as having a speech or language disability tend to peak in elementary school and significantly decline as students progress to middle and high school. Conversely, students with more significant disabilities (i.e., students who are blind, hearing impaired or have Autism) tend to be identified at an earlier age,



**Figure 5. Counts of Students with Disabilities Ages 5-18 Across All Public Schools in 2011**

<sup>17</sup>U.S. Department of Education. *IDEA Section 618 Data Products: State Level Data Files* [Child Count (2011). Available from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/os-epidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#part-b> (accessed July 31, 2015).

frequently in early childhood, and their identification rates tend not to change.

One question that arises from these historical trends is the following: do charter school grade configurations skew enrollment proportion of students with disabilities? To explore this question, we examined whether charter schools are serving a notably different population of students according to age.

Based on data from the USDOE’s Office of Special Education Program’s (OSEP) 36th Annual Report to Congress<sup>18</sup>, it appears that the highest numbers of students with disabilities are located in the 9-14 age range. This age range corresponds to a grade range of roughly grade 3 to grade 8 or 9.

One trend observed in Figure 5 is that the number of students with disabilities seems to increase from one age to the next in the 5-10 age range. While these data only show a cross-section of a single year, they appear to indicate that disability identification occurs more frequently leading up to age 10. After age 10, the numbers of students with disabilities seem to remain similar or decrease, indicating fewer incidences of disability identification.

In an effort to better understand the potential relationship between the grades a school offers and the enrollment of students with disabilities, NCSECS placed schools in the CRDC into different categories pertaining to grade ranges. These categories were necessary because the CRDC did not display enrollment totals by each grade individually. Through using a school’s grades offered to create grade categories, it was possible to arrive at a clearer idea of what the enrollment trends might be for particular grade ranges. It is relevant to note that a common practice in the charter sector is for new charter schools to grow one new grade a year. While we can’t confirm based on the CRDC data, it is reasonable to note that some of the apparently “other” grade configurations are not by design but rather a reflection of schools growing to full grade offerings. There is no overlap between any of the grade categories.

Table 6 presents statistics for each grade category. In terms of how common each category of grade configurations is for traditional public schools and charter schools, the results are different: for traditional public schools, the most common grade category is Elementary (52.6%), but for charter schools the most common grade category is Elementary/Middle/High (24.8%). Traditional public schools have lower representation among the grade categories that span several different school types (e.g., the

<sup>18</sup>U.S. Department of Education. *IDEA Section 618 Data Products: State Level Data Files* [Child Count (2011). Available from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/os-epidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#part-b> (accessed July 31, 2015).

Elementary/Middle, Grades 6–12, and Elementary/Middle/High categories). On the other hand, charter schools have slightly higher representation among these categories.

The more heavily represented school models do not necessarily have the largest proportions of students with disabilities enrolled. Even though combined Elementary/Middle/High schools are somewhat uncommon among traditional public schools (2.0%), the proportion of students with disabilities is the highest for that category (30.45%). This proportion may be skewed by a number of schools that are specialized schools for students with disabilities. The data indicate that 681 (41.5%) of the 1,641 traditional public Elementary/Middle/High schools self-identified

as special education-focused schools. In the sample of 681 traditional public schools that serve grades K–12, 65.2% of the students with disabilities were attending these specialized schools. The average proportion of students with disabilities at the specialized, traditional public Elementary/Middle/High schools was 87.47%, whereas the proportion for students with disabilities at non-specialized, traditional public Elementary/Middle/High schools was 13.72%.

When examined by grade configurations, the average percentages of enrollment by students with disabilities are in a range of 9–12% in charter schools, whereas for traditional public schools the range appears to be greater:

**Table 6. Enrollment Profiles of Schools by Category of Grades Offered<sup>19</sup>**

Grade Configuration	Profile	Charter Schools	Traditional Public Schools
Elementary (Pre-K/K–Grade 6)	# Schools	924	43,042
	% All Schools	22.0%	52.6%
	Total Enrollment	339,914	20,930,613
	% Students with Disabilities	9.16%	12.07%
Middle (Grades 6–8)	# Schools	297	11,666
	% All Schools	7.1%	14.2%
	Total Enrollment	106,342	7,552,755
	% Students with Disabilities	10.63%	12.46%
High (Grades 9–12)	# Schools	783	13,253
	% All Schools	18.7%	16.2%
	Total Enrollment	286,334	12,495,069
	% Students with Disabilities	11.61%	11.79%
Elementary/Middle (Pre-K/K–Grade 8) <sup>20</sup>	# Schools	1,043	4,417
	% All Schools	24.8%	5.4%
	Total Enrollment	457,030	2,146,363
	% Students with Disabilities	9.62%	13.43%
Middle/High (Grades 6–12)	# Schools	368	3,884
	% All Schools	8.8%	4.7%
	Total Enrollment	160,307	1,580,188
	% Students with Disabilities	10.90%	13.90%
Elementary/Middle/High (Pre-K/K–Grade 12)	# Schools	458	1,641
	% All Schools	10.9%	2.0%
	Total Enrollment	387,499	430,604
	% Students with Disabilities	10.95%	30.45%
Other	# Schools	325	3,978
	% All Schools	7.7%	4.9%
	Total Enrollment	124,130	1,513,507
	% Students with Disabilities	11.55%	18.05%

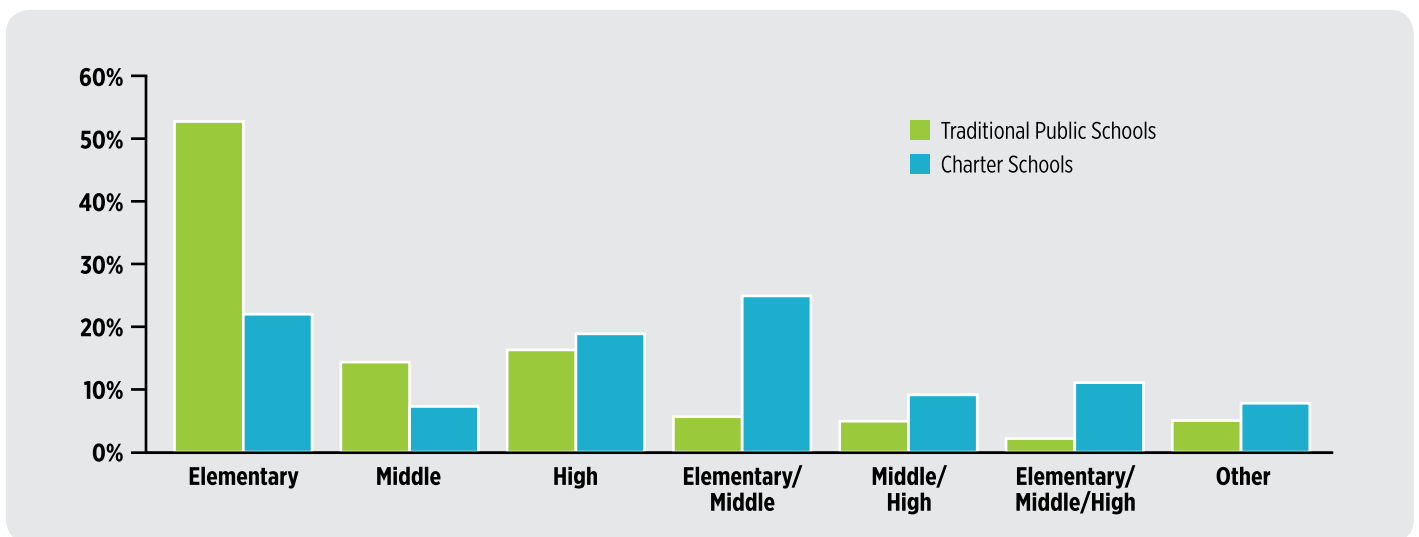
<sup>19</sup>The total number of charter schools is 4,141 and the total number of traditional public schools is 81,274. The samples used are the same as the ones from the general enrollment analysis.

<sup>20</sup>The “Elementary/Middle” and “Elementary/Middle/High” categories are named for the full possible range of grades offered by schools in those categories. It may be the case that some schools do not have preschool grades offered. Also, these two categories are distinct from the singular Elementary, Middle, and High categories.

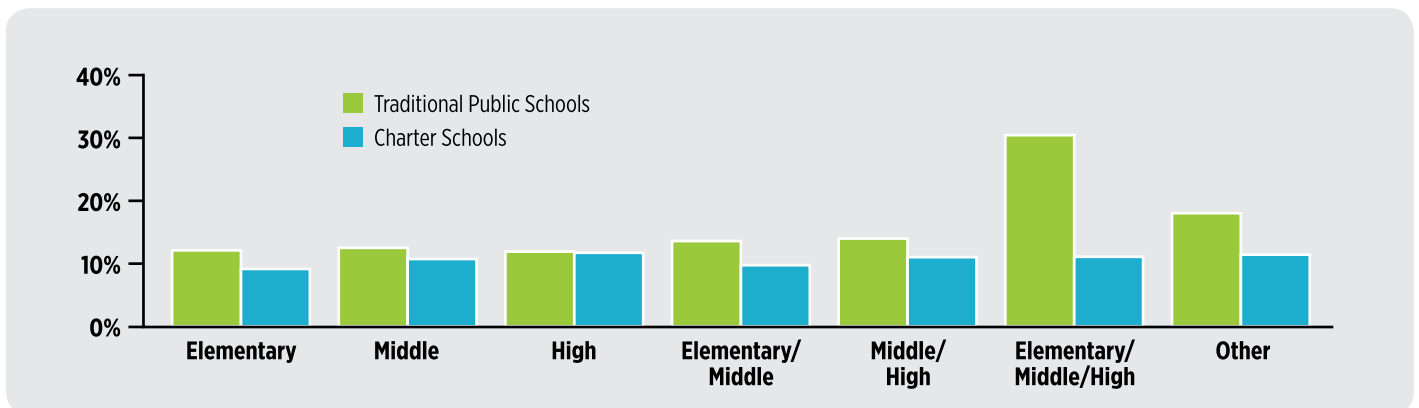
11–31%. However, the higher end of that range is due to the traditional public schools that self-identified as special education schools in the Elementary/Middle/High category. Removing special education-focused schools from each category results in very small changes to the enrollment percentages of students with disabilities (less than 1% of a difference) except for the Elementary/Middle/High (30.45% to 13.72%) and Other (18.05% to 14.89%) categories. With the special education schools removed, the new range for traditional public schools becomes 11–15%. For charter schools, filtering out any special education-focused schools changes the range only slightly: 8–12% instead of 9–12%. The adjustment to the range results from the percentage of students with disabilities in the Elementary category dropping to 8.97% once the special education charter schools are removed. The other changes to the percentages among charter schools are similarly small (no greater than 1%).

In Figures 6 and 7, different proportions of students with disabilities are presented. In the first chart, one can see the proportions of schools that fall into each category (these data correspond to the percentages in the second row of each grade category in Table 6). In the second chart, one can see the average enrollment percentage for students with disabilities (these data correspond to the percentages in the fourth row of each grade category in Table 6). The second chart visualizes the greater variability of enrollment percentages of students with disabilities in traditional public schools. Comparing the two figures allows one to see the relative amount of schools that correspond to each enrollment percentage across the grade categories for the two school groups.

One of the questions NCSECS sought to answer concerned the potential relationship between certain grade ranges (such as the Elementary grades) and the corresponding population of students with disabilities. What might be the



**Figure 6. Comparison of the Proportions of Schools in Each Category of Grades Offered**



**Figure 7. Comparison of the Average Enrollment Percentages of Students with Disabilities in Charter and Traditional Public Schools by Category of Grades Offered**

effect of early identification on the proportion of students with disabilities overall, for instance? Without better detail on students moving into and out of special education however, it is difficult to answer this question. Once future iterations of the CRDC are released, greater clarity about the movement of students with disabilities in different grade ranges will hopefully emerge.

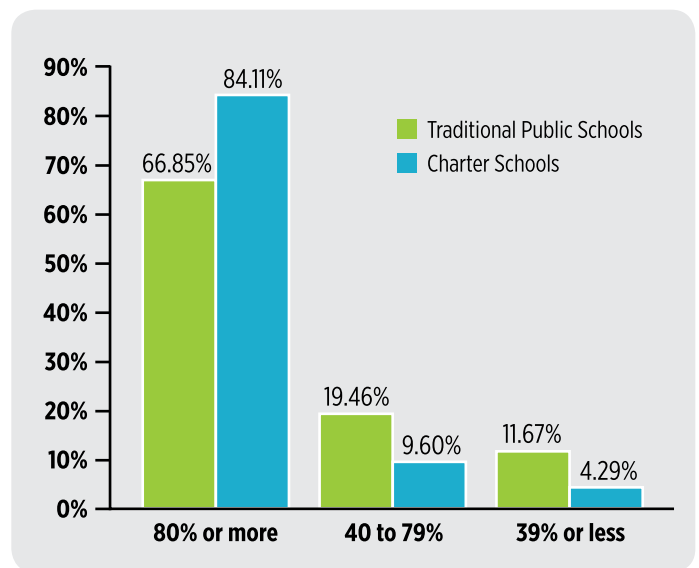
## Provision of Special Education and Related Services in Charter Schools

While the CRDC does not contain detailed information on specific special education placements or services provided, it does contain data regarding the extent to which students with disabilities are taught in regular education classrooms. In line with federal statutes, the regular 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 regular education classroom. Since IDEA and Section 504 both have requirements related to providing students a free 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 tiers of inclusion: in the regular education classroom 80% or more of the day; in the regular education classroom between 40% and 79% of the day; and in the regular education classroom for 39% or less of the day. Figure 8 shows the percentage of students with

disabilities at each of the three tiers by type of school, and Table 7 shows the percentage and number of students with disabilities at each of the three tiers.

Nationally, 84.11% of students with disabilities in charter schools and 66.85% of students with disabilities in traditional public schools were educated in regular classes for 80% or more of the school day. As observed in the other two categories of inclusion, traditional public schools place relatively more students with disabilities in lower tiers of inclusion than do charter schools. The data indicate that charter schools on average are placing students with disabilities in the regular education classroom more often than are traditional public schools.



**Figure 8. Students with Disabilities in the Regular Education Classroom by Percentage of Time and School Type**

**Table 7. Educational Environment Summary Data Table**

Type of School	Number of Schools	Number of Students by Degree of Inclusion (% of time spent in the regular education classroom)			Other Inclusion Environments <sup>21</sup>	Total Students with Disabilities
		80% or more	40 to 79%	39% or less		
Traditional Public	77,332	2,735,329 (66.85%)	796,095 (19.46%)	477,289 (11.67%)	82,802 (2.02%)	4,091,515
Charter	3,447	98,954 (84.11%)	11,295 (9.60%)	5,044 (4.29%)	2,361 (2.01%)	117,654
Grand Total	80,779	2,834,283 (67.34%)	807,390 (19.18%)	482,333 (11.46%)	85,163 (2.02%)	4,209,169

<sup>21</sup>The other inclusion environments include: correctional facility placements, homebound/hospital placements, parentally made placements in private schools, residential facility placements, and separate school placements. As seen in Table 8, the relative amount of these types of placements is quite low (around 2%) in traditional public and charter schools.

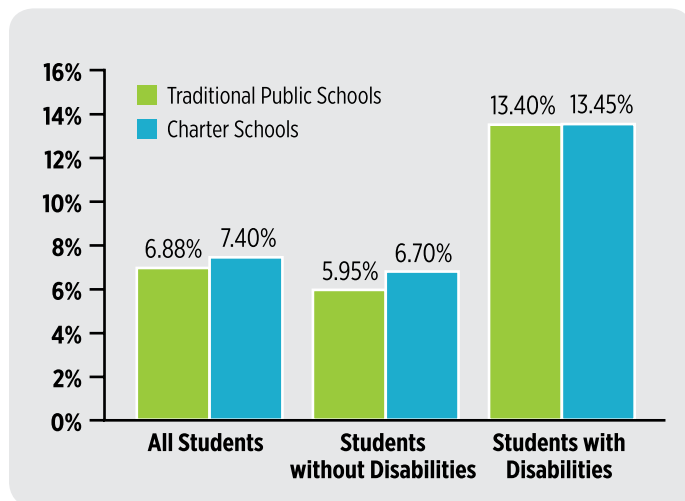
## Discipline of Students in Charter and Traditional Public Schools: Suspensions

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 suspension data for students with disabilities and nondisabled peers in charter and traditional public schools.

While students with *disabilities* are suspended more frequently than *nondisabled* peers across all schools, differences in the use of exclusionary discipline used overall exist between charter schools and traditional public schools in the CRDC data set. Data from the CRDC

indicate charter schools suspend a greater percentage of their students than other public schools (i.e., 7.40% vs. 6.88%).

The greater percentage of suspensions among charters appears to be driven by the higher rate of suspensions among students without disabilities (see Figure 9). The difference in the overall suspension rates does not appear to be affected by the suspension rates of students with disabilities, since the two groups of schools suspend students with disabilities at rates around 13.4%. Table 8 presents the numbers of students suspended across the student and school groups. Regardless of school type, the discipline data are disconcerting given extensive research on the long-term impact of discipline on at-risk students.<sup>22</sup>



**Figure 9. Percentage of Students with at Least One Out-Of-School Suspension from Total Enrollment, Separated by Student Group and School Group**

## Discipline of Students in Charter and Traditional Public Schools: Expulsions

In the CRDC, the expulsion data are separated by three categories: With Educational Services, Without Educational Services, and Zero-tolerance Policies.<sup>23</sup> The first two refer to the expulsion environment of the student; in some cases, educational services continue to be provided during a student’s expulsion. In other cases however, no such services are provided. The third category includes students who were expelled for an extended length of time as a result of school’s zero-tolerance policies. Such policies are ones that require the mandatory expulsion of a student who commits one or more specified offenses (e.g., offenses involving guns and other weapons, violence, or similar factors).<sup>24</sup>

**Table 8. Suspensions in Charter and Traditional Public Schools**

Type of School	Suspension Counts (i.e., at least one suspension)			Student Counts			
	Students w/ Disabilities	Students w/out Disabilities	Total Students	Students w/ Disabilities	Students w/out Disabilities	Total Students	# of Schools
Traditional Public	783,595	2,423,376	3,206,971	5,846,614	40,760,422	46,607,036	81,801
Charter	26,011	111,501	137,512	193,377	1,663,885	1,857,262	4,182
Grand Total	809,606	2,534,877	3,344,483	6,039,991	42,424,307	48,464,298	85,983

<sup>22</sup>Losen, D, Hodson, C., Ketih, M. A., Morrison, K., Belway, S. (2015, February). Are we closing the school discipline gap. Los Angeles: The Center for Civil Rights Remedies; Denice, P., Gross, & Rausch, K. (September 2015). Understanding students discipline practices in charter schools: A research agenda. Seattle Washington, Center on Reinventing Public Education.

<sup>23</sup>The CRDC defines “zero tolerance” as: “A zero-tolerance policy is a policy that results in mandatory expulsion of any student who commits one or more specified offenses (for example, offenses involving guns, or other weapons, or violence, or similar factors, or combinations of these factors). A policy is considered “zero tolerance” even if there are some exceptions to the mandatory aspect of the expulsion, such as allowing the chief administering officer of an LEA to modify the expulsion on a case-by-case basis.”

<sup>24</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *CRDC Data Definitions* [CRDC 2011-12 Definitions]. Retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/DataDefinitions> (accessed July 31, 2015).



Figure 10 and Table 9 show information for expulsions overall—the combination of the expulsions with educational services and the expulsions without educational services. Charter schools expel relatively more students, whether those students have or do not have disabilities. In both traditional public and charter schools, the expulsion rates are higher for students with disabilities.<sup>25</sup>

Figure 11 and Table 10 depict information regarding expulsions given with educational services. Following a student's expulsion, that student would continue to receive educational services for the remainder of the school year or longer, depending on the LEA.<sup>26</sup> In this category of expulsion,

traditional public schools have slightly higher expulsion rates than charter schools do for students without disabilities. However, charter schools again show higher expulsion rates for students without disabilities.

Figure 12 and Table 11 show the data for expulsions without educational services.<sup>27</sup> In this expulsion category, charter schools expel relatively more students without disabilities and students with disabilities than traditional public schools do.

Lastly, Figure 13 and Table 12 show information about students expelled under zero-tolerance policies. This expulsion category is not considered in the Overall group presented in Figure 10 and Table 9 since it is not unique from

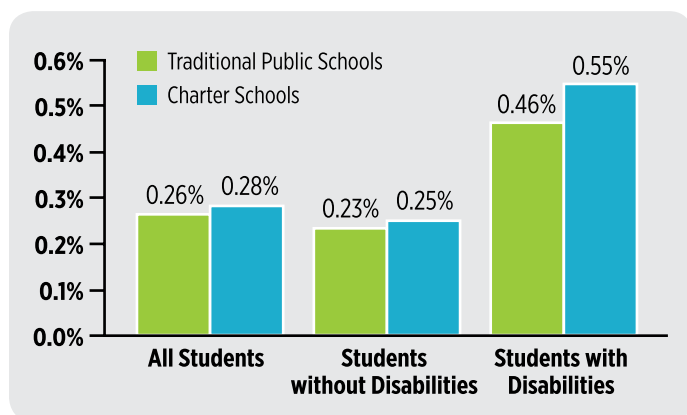


Figure 10. Percentages of Expelled Students Overall

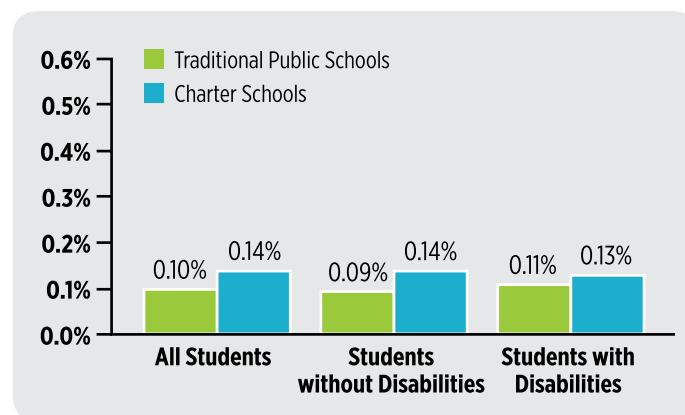


Figure 12. Percentages of Students with and without Disabilities Expelled without Educational Services

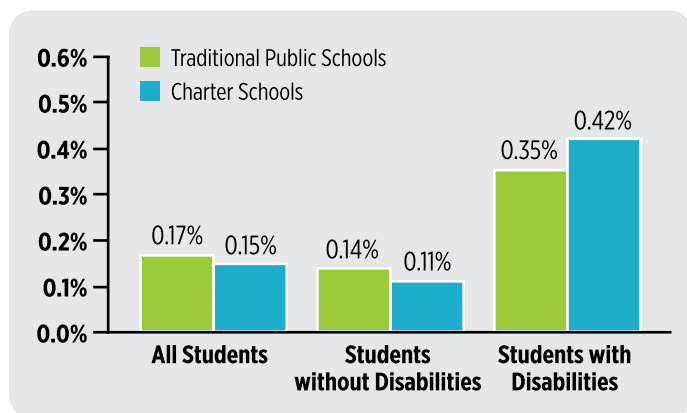


Figure 11. Percentages of Students with and without Disabilities Expelled with Educational Services

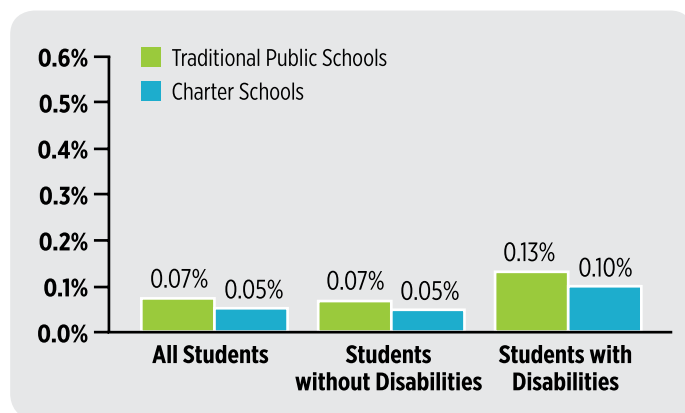


Figure 13. Percentages of Students with and without Disabilities Expelled under Zero-tolerance Policies

<sup>25</sup>It should be noted that suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities, and specifically the apparently disproportionate rate which they are disciplined relative to their peers without disabilities, is an ongoing public education policy concern. For a more extensive discussion of this issue, see: U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014, March). Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot School Discipline. Washington, DC. Retrieved July 31, 2015 from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-discipline-snapshot.pdf>

<sup>26</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *CRDC Data Definitions* [CRDC 2011-12 Definitions]. Retrieved July 31, 2015 from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/DataDefinitions>.

<sup>27</sup>As defined by the CRDC, “expulsions without educational services” refers to an action taken by the local educational agency of removing a child from his/her regular school for disciplinary purposes, and not providing educational services to the child for the remainder of the school year or longer in accordance with local educational agency policy.” While the IDEA guarantees students with disabilities FAPE, this data point indicates that both traditional public schools and charter schools appear to expelling some students with disabilities and not providing ongoing supports or services. Alternatively, this could be a data reporting error.

the expulsion with or without educational services categories. Including the zero-tolerance policies category into the Overall group may have resulted in double counting, so it

is considered separately. In the context of zero-tolerance policies, traditional public schools have higher expulsion rates than charter schools do.

**Table 9. Summary Statistics – Overall Expulsions**

Type of School	Expulsion Counts – Overall			Student Counts			
	Students with Disability	Students without Disability	Total Students	Students with Disability	Students without Disability	Total Students	# of Schools
Traditional Public	27,142	95,647	122,789	5,851,518	40,777,841	46,629,359	81,847
Charter	1,060	4,211	5,271	193,377	1,663,885	1,857,262	4,182
Grand Total	28,202	99,858	128,060	6,044,895	42,441,726	48,486,621	86,029

**Table 10. Summary Statistics – Expulsions with Educational Services**

Type of School	Students Expelled – with Educational Services			Student Counts			
	Students with Disability	Students without Disability	Total Students	Students with Disability	Students without Disability	Total Students	# of Schools
Traditional Public	20,729	57,389	78,118	5,851,518	40,777,841	46,629,359	81,847
Charter	814	1,899	2,713	193,377	1,663,885	1,857,262	4,182
Grand Total	21,543	59,288	80,831	6,044,895	42,441,726	48,486,621	86,029

**Table 11. Summary Statistics - Expulsions without Educational Services**

Type of School	Students Expelled – without Educational Services			Student Counts			
	Students with Disability	Students without Disability	Total Students	Students with Disability	Students without Disability	Total Students	# of Schools
Traditional Public	6,413	38,258	44,671	5,851,518	40,777,841	46,629,359	81,847
Charter	246	2,312	2,558	193,377	1,663,885	1,857,262	4,182
Grand Total	6,659	40,570	47,229	6,044,895	42,441,726	48,486,621	86,029

**Table 12. Summary Statistics – Expulsions under Zero-tolerance Policies**

Type of School	Students Expelled – Zero-tolerance Policies			Student Counts			
	Students with Disability	Students without Disability	Total Students	Students with Disability	Students without Disability	Total Students	# of Schools
Traditional Public	7,874	26,705	34,579	5,849,975	40,774,215	46,624,190	81,831
Charter	184	805	989	193,341	1,663,573	1,856,914	4,179
Grand Total	8,058	27,510	35,568	6,043,316	42,437,788	48,481,104	86,010

As a summary of the expulsion rate statistics:

- Across both traditional public and charter schools, the rates of expulsion are low: not a single one is above 1%.
- Traditional public schools expel students without disabilities at a slightly greater rate in the “With Educational Services” (0.14% vs. 0.11%) and “Zero-tolerance Policies” (0.07% vs. 0.05%) categories.
- Charter schools expel students without disabilities at a higher rate in the “Without Educational Services” (0.14% vs. 0.09%) category.
- In the “Overall” category, the percentages are higher in charter schools for students with disabilities (0.52% vs. 0.44%) and students without disabilities (0.25% vs. 0.22%).
- Expulsion rates are generally higher for students with disabilities across the different categories of expulsion.
- The majority of expulsions fall under the “With Educational Services” category for both traditional public and charter schools.

## Specialized Charter Schools

While traditional public school systems have historically operated specialized schools, the current trend is to promote more inclusive classrooms by reducing the number of segregated ones a.k.a. “center-based programs” (i.e., settings in which students with disabilities have little if any interaction with their non-disabled peers). 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 the IDEA.

A specialized school is one that primarily or entirely focuses on serving students with either a particular disability or any disability. Starting with a list compiled by Julie Mead<sup>28</sup> in 2006 for a federally funded research study, NCSECS sought to verify how many specialized charter schools there are in the United States. Using Mead’s list, we added some charter schools that were opportunistically identified through tracking in Google News Alerts, and made adjustments based on whether or not the status of schools had changed (e.g., a closure). This resulted in a list of 92 schools. Building from this base, our team cross-referenced this list with the CRDC to verify, update, and

expand our list of specialized charter schools. As with some of our other secondary analyses, not all schools could be checked; 3 schools had privacy-protected data, 10 schools could not be located within the CRDC, and 3 opened after the 2011-12 academic year (one of these three schools will open in 2015).

## Developing a Definition of a “Specialized” Charter School

Where data were not masked due to privacy-protection, NCSECS examined whether or not the school had been coded as a special education school.<sup>29</sup> The CRDC had asked all schools to categorize themselves in terms of their school type (e.g., charter, magnet, or traditional public). We looked at schools that had self-identified as special education schools, as well as schools that had not identified themselves as such but had a percentage of students with disabilities enrolled and used the following criteria to create our category of “specialized charter schools:”

*If a charter self-identified in the CRDC as a “special education school,” we included it, but only if at least 25% of the school’s total enrollment as reported in the CRDC database was made up of students with disabilities. (The 25% figure came from choosing a number that was slightly more than twice the national average enrollment of students with disabilities (12.47%).)*

- The CRDC data returned 87 schools based on these criteria. There were 9,220 students at these schools, 6,999 of whom had some form of disability. The average enrollment of students with disabilities across these schools was 75.91%.
- In this first list, 79 of the 87 self-identifying schools exhibited enrollment rates for student with disabilities at or above the 50% threshold. The majority of self-identifying charter schools therefore appear to meet our definition.
- There were 23 charter schools in the CRDC that self-identified as specialized schools but had enrollment of students with disabilities averaging less than 25%. The lowest enrollment average of students with disabilities at these schools was 3.79% and the highest was 23.81%. Only two schools had enrollment percentages above 20%. Although these schools were listed as “specialized” according to their own definition, they did not meet our criteria.

<sup>28</sup>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> (accessed July 31, 2015).

<sup>29</sup>Please see Appendix A—Specialized Charter Identification Methodology section for specific details on how the CRDC asked about a school’s specialized status.

If the charter school had **not** been identified as a special education school in the CRDC, but 50% or more of its enrolled students had disabilities, it was included in our sample.

- These criteria resulted in a list of 32 schools. Out of the 3,448 students enrolled at these schools, 2,639 of them had a disability, or an average of 76.54%.
- On the basis of enrollment percentage, this second group of “potential” specialized charter schools was similar to the self-identifying specialized charter schools in terms of the enrollment percentages of students with disabilities.
- 23 schools found through these criteria were not on NCSECS’s original list.
- 15 schools were added from the first list and 8 were added from the second list.
- The total number of schools on NCSECS’s list thus grew to 115 (92 originally plus the 23 new schools found in the CRDC). However, as noted above, some schools were not present in the CRDC data set. Of the 115 schools on NCSECS’s final list, only 99 had enrollment data that could be analyzed.

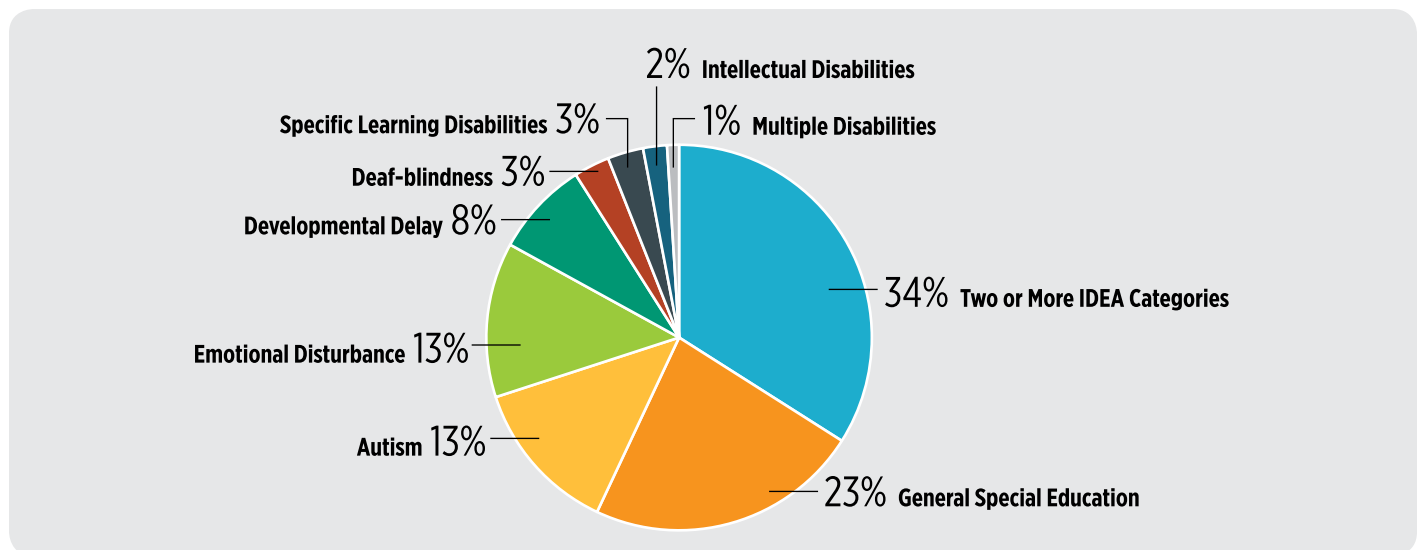
Based on these data, we determined that regardless of self-identification as a specialized school, charter schools with 50% or more students with disabilities enrolled arguably

belong to a niche category of “specialized charter schools.” We observed that if a school enrolls such a significant percentage of students with disabilities, then the school, either through marketing or offering a particular instructional approach that is attractive to students with disabilities, is a specialized school. However, it is important to not lose sight of the fact that schools chose whether or not to self-identify in the questionnaire that supplies data to the CRDC. Without direct input, it is difficult to determine why they did not despite the fact that they enroll a proportion of students with disabilities that is much higher than the national average.<sup>30</sup>

### Areas of Focus of Specialized Charter Schools

NCSECS gathered information from the websites of specialized charter schools in order to assess if a school had a focus on a particular category of disability. With this information, we were able to develop a better idea about the students that specialized charter schools serve. Since the CRDC was not used for this aspect of the analysis, NCSECS was able to collect information for all of the 115 specialized charter schools on the list.

Figure 14 represents the disability categories that specialized charter schools focus on.<sup>31</sup> As can be observed, many specialized charter schools have a focus on two or more IDEA categories<sup>32</sup> of specific disabilities. The next



**Figure 14. Distribution of Disability Focus Among Specialized Charter Schools**

<sup>30</sup>Please see Appendix A for more details on how NCSECS verified a school’s specialized status when it was not clear from the CRDC.

<sup>31</sup>The disability category of “multiple disabilities” is a term used to describe a student with several disabilities (e.g., a student with a sensory disability and a motor disability). Related to but different from the IDEA category, the phrase “two or more IDEA categories” captures schools that explicitly seek to specialize in serving students who are identified with different types of disabilities (e.g., students with Autism as well as students with Emotional Disturbance).

<sup>32</sup>The categories of disability according to the IDEA are: Autism, Deaf-blindness, Developmental Delay, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disabilities, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disabilities, Speech/Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visual Impairments.

largest group of disability representation is a general special education focus (i.e., General Special Education). Essentially, schools with such a focus seek to accommodate students with various disabilities. These two broader groups make up 57% of the specialized charter schools. In terms of more specific disability categories, Autism and Emotional Disturbance are the most represented at 13%.

### Specialized Charter School Locations by State

In addition to understanding the disability focuses of specialized charter schools, NCSECS also examined how these schools are distributed across the United States. 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.

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 (14 schools; 9 which are General Spectrum and 5 which are 2 or more disability types), followed by a focus on Autism and Developmental Delay (9 schools each). In Ohio, 34 of the schools are focused on two or more disabilities (the Summit Academy network, which comprises the majority of Ohio’s specialized charter schools, mentions Autism and Specific Learning Disabilities in particular as areas of priority). Texas, the state with the third highest amount of specialized charter schools, is different from the other two states since Emotional Disturbance is the most common disability focus (11 schools).

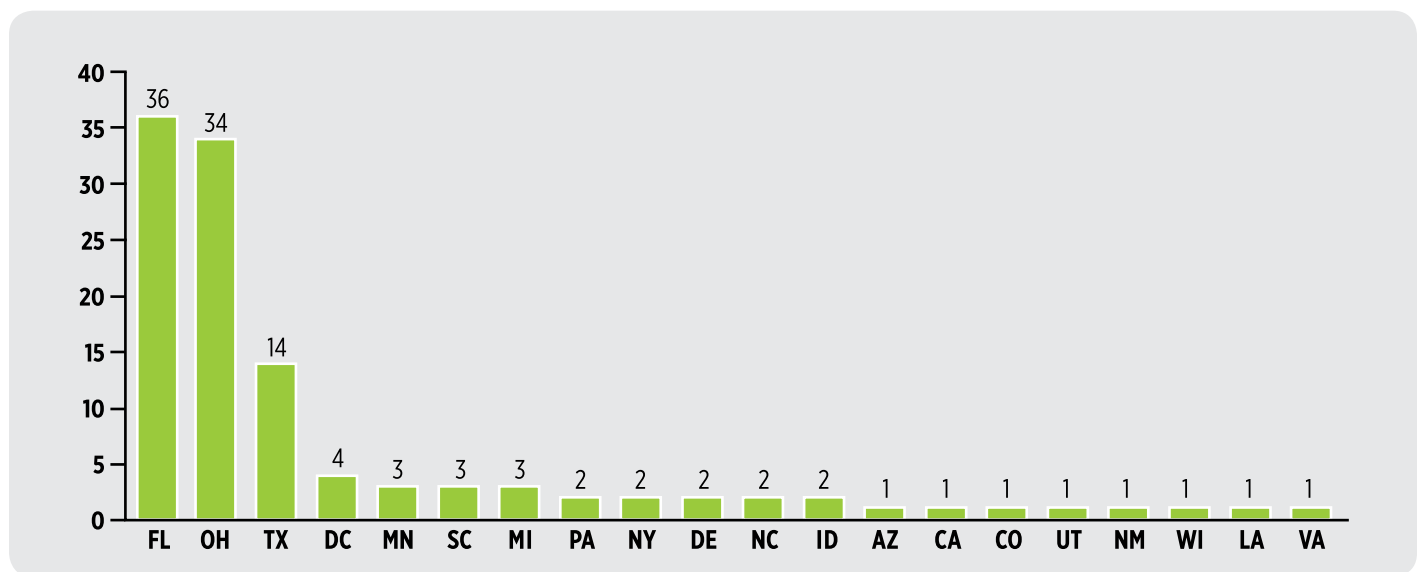


Figure 15. Clustering of Specialized Charter Schools by State

# Summary and Policy Recommendations



The CRDC presents a unique opportunity to analyze data across the universe of traditional public and charter schools. It is valuable in that it can inform the broader conversation regarding the status of special education in charter schools. Given the limitations of the data set, we restricted presentation of our secondary analysis to basic descriptive statistics. However, our hope is that future data collections will build on the lessons learned from the initial universal collection and produce even more robust data that would support more sophisticated secondary analyses.

## Key Findings

In conducting our secondary analysis, our primary aim was to identify a foundation upon which future data trends can be compared. High-level findings include:

- On average, charter schools enroll proportionally fewer students with disabilities than traditional public schools: 10.42% in charter schools vs. 12.55% in traditional public schools.
- Students who qualify for Section 504 support made up 1.53% of all students at traditional public schools and 1.52% of all students in charter schools.
- Compared to traditional public schools, charter schools appear to be keeping a relatively greater proportion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom for 80% or more of the school day.
  - Of students with disabilities in charter schools, 84% spend 80% or more of the school day in the regular education classroom.
  - In traditional public schools, 67% of students with disabilities spend 80% or more of the school day in the regular education classroom.
- Separating schools into categories based on grades reveals differences between traditional public schools and charter schools in regard to how common certain school models are. However, these differences do not appear to be skewing the data notably for either type of school. In fact, it appears that more common school models do not necessarily have higher average percentages of enrollment by students with disabilities.
- For traditional public schools, the most common grade category is Elementary (52.6% of all traditional public schools), but for charter schools the most common grade category is Elementary/Middle/High (24.8% of all charter schools).
- The average enrollment of students with disabilities at traditional public Elementary schools was 12.07% (the 5th highest, out of 7 grade configuration categories), whereas the average enrollment by students with disabilities at charter Elementary/Middle/High schools was 9.62% (the 6th highest, out of 7 grade configuration categories).
- Across the different grade categories, the average percentages of students with disabilities are in a range of 9–12% in charter schools, whereas for traditional public schools the range appears to be greater: 11–31% (the greater range in traditional public schools is due to the presence of many specialized schools in the Elementary/Middle/High category).
- A proportionally greater number of all students are suspended in charter schools than in traditional schools (7.40% VS. 6.88%). Regarding the population of students with disabilities however, the discipline proportions are very similar: 13.45% of students in charter schools and 13.40% in traditional public schools have been suspended at least once.
- Students with disabilities are expelled more often than their peers without disabilities in both types of schools and charter schools expel a slightly greater proportion

of students with disabilities (0.55% vs. 0.25% in charter schools and 0.46% vs. 0.23% in traditional public schools).

- NCSECS identified 115 specialized charter schools, 99 of which reported data in the 2011-2012 CRDC.
  - Enrollment trends at specialized charter schools indicate much higher proportions of students with disabilities — 77% on average — compared to the average proportions (closer to 12.4%).

While noting the limitations, these data appear to indicate that charter schools are enrolling proportionally more students with disabilities over time. For instance, the U.S. General Accountability Office (GAO) found that in 2008–2009, the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools compared to traditional public schools was 7.7% to 11.3%, respectively.<sup>33</sup> Based on data reported by the GAO in 2009–2010, 8.2% of all students enrolled at charter schools were students with disabilities, compared to 11.2% observed in traditional public schools. Based on our secondary analysis of data from the CRDC, those proportions have changed to 10.42% and 12.55%, respectively. The gap in percentages has been dropping over time: 3.6%, 3%, and most recently 2.13%. The gap for the 2011-2012 academic year could be closer to 2.49–2.60%, depending on how many students with disabilities were enrolled at the schools that were removed from the sample due to privacy-protection. There remains significant variation at the state level, and presumably also within states themselves, due in some part to the myriad of educational laws for both charter schools and traditional public schools. However, the overall trend appears to indicate that the gap of enrollment of students with disabilities between charter schools and traditional public schools is decreasing.

It should be noted that the existence of specialized charter schools could be influencing some of these trends, but these schools represent a small sub-set of charter schools and are relatively small themselves. In order to determine the effect that specialized charter schools might have had on the overall enrollment data for all charter schools, NCSECS filtered the schools out and performed the enrollment analysis again.<sup>34</sup> The specialized charter

<sup>33</sup>Government Accountability Office. (2012, June). 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>

<sup>34</sup>With the specialized charter schools removed, the enrollment statistics for non-specialized charter schools are the following: 1,851,672 total students enrolled (compared to 1,861,556, a change of -0.53%); 186,312 students with disabilities enrolled (compared to 193,928, a change of -3.92%); 4,099 total charter schools (compared to 4,198, a change of -2.36%); an enrollment percentage of 10.06% for students with disabilities (compared to 10.42%, a drop of 0.36% points).

schools do have some bearing on the overall enrollment statistics for all charter schools, but the degree of effect is not very large.

Given the subjectivity in special education eligibility and concurrent concerns about over-identification, enrollment data are not the sole variable of interest in terms of assessing charter schools' fulfillment of responsibilities related to students with disabilities. However, enrollment data, especially national averages, are one important metric by which we can assess equality of access on a longitudinal basis.

The data regarding discipline confirm that far too many students with disabilities are facing disciplinary consequences for their behaviors, but this concern applies to all schools. The data from the CRDC do not indicate that charter schools are suspending students with disability more than their peers in traditional public schools. However, expulsions appear to be more common for students with disabilities in charter schools than they are for students with disabilities in traditional public schools.

Finally, the data related to specialized charter schools, long a concern of special education advocates given implications for efforts to educate students in the least restrictive environment, confirm that these schools are a small niche of the broader charter sector but apparently less segregated (i.e., fewer schools are 100% students with disabilities) than similar schools in the traditional system.



## Policy Recommendations

Our secondary analysis of the CRDC significantly advances the discussion regarding the status of special education in the charter sector but work remains to be done to ensure that students with disabilities are positioned to benefit from the autonomies extended to charter schools. Based on our analyses of the data and experience working in the field of special education in charter schools, we propose the following recommendations for federal, state, and local policy makers and practitioners:

### Federal

- The U.S. DOE's National Center for Education Statistics and Office for Civil Rights should continue to support and improve large-scale data collection efforts, such as the Civil Rights Data Collection, and secondary analyses of these large data sets and provide detailed information about privacy protection decision rules to optimize analyses and identify information critical to development of sound policy at the federal and state level.
- The USDOE should connect key datasets such as the CRDC and IDEA indicators reported as part of the Results Driven Accountability to facilitate correlational analyses that may provide insights into how key traditional public as well as charter schools' policies and practices influence outcomes for students with disabilities.
- The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and Office of Innovation and Improvement in the USDOE should collaborate to identify mutual interests and facilitate development of guidance that support students with disabilities accessing charter schools and development of quality special education programs within these schools.

### State

- Leveraging the data published by the CRDC, state education agencies (SEAs) should annually track and report data regarding special education enrollment, service provision, discipline rates, and academic outcomes as leading indicators of the extent to which students with disabilities are accessing and succeeding in charter schools. In instances where schools are determined to be outside an acceptable range to be identified by the SEA, actions should be taken to ensure students with disabilities are not being discriminated against when seeking access to or services in charter schools.

- SEAs should periodically review state policies and authorizing practices relative to their impact on recruitment, admission and retention practices, especially in states experiencing notable differences in the enrollment of students with disabilities in traditional and charter public schools. Such examination and review will help SEAs better understand why major differences in enrollment exist.

### Local

- Authorizers should examine charter school discipline policies and procedures, including the need for personnel training to help support development of charter school culture that is focused on providing a safe and positive learning environment for all.
- Authorizers should rigorously monitor indicators of their charter schools' performance in providing a free appropriate public education to all students with disabilities and nondisabled peers, in line with the intent and mandates of IDEA, Section 504, and ESEA.
- Charter schools should ensure they understand their legal status as either an independent local education agency (LEA) or part of an existing LEA and the respective responsibilities articulated under ESEA, the IDEA and Section 504 related to access and provision of special education and related services.

## Conclusions

In the aggregate, the data from the CRDC confirm that students with disabilities are enrolling in charter schools, but there appears to be evidence there is room to improve access. When considered across the universe of schools, it does seem reasonable to expect that roughly 12% of the students enrolling in charter schools would be eligible for special education. However, some states or districts report that 15–18% of students qualify for special education. Given that identification decisions may be subjective, historic concerns about over-identifying students for special education, and that some state funding systems provide incentives to identify students as having a disability, closing the apparent enrollment gap at the local level is not necessarily a universal goal. Rather, the goal should be to ensure that charter schools not only welcome students with disabilities in line with federal civil right statutes but that they also operate robust programs that enable all students to succeed, including students with a diverse array of disabilities.





## Appendix A: Technical Notes

### Overview of Samples Used

Each analysis presented in this report draws on a range of data files within the CRDC. The specific files are named in each analysis's individual section within Appendix A. In order to provide a clearer picture of the samples used in the report, the following table shows a breakdown of how many schools were in the data files originally and how many schools were in the actual analysis. In general, the total number of schools was 95,635. Taking out the 13 schools that were incorrectly coded as charter schools

(see the "Incorrect Charter School Identification" section below), the total became 95,622 (90,322 traditional public schools and 5,300 charter schools).

### Analyses

For some analyses, data from different files were combined. For instance, general enrollment data were not located within the discipline-related files. It was necessary then to use the overall enrollment data file in order to provide

**Table A1: Summary of Schools Used in the Analyses<sup>35</sup>**

Corresponding Pages in Report	Analysis	Counts of Schools Removed		Counts of Schools in the Final Sample	
		Traditional Public	Charter	Traditional Public	Charter
9–17	Enrollment – IDEA Students	8,441 (9.4%)	1,102 (20.8%)	81,881 (90.6%)	4,198 (79.2%)
9–11	Enrollment – 504 Students	8 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	90,314 (100%)	5,300 (100%)
18–22	Grade Range Profiles	8,441 (9.4%)	1,102 (20.8%)	81,881 (90.6%)	4,198 (79.2%)
23–24	Provision of Special Education	12,990 (14.4%)	1,853 (35.0%)	77,332 (85.6%)	3,447 (64.4%)
24–25	Discipline – Suspensions	8,521 (9.4%)	1,118 (21.1%)	81,801 (90.6%)	4,182 (78.9%)
26	Discipline – Expulsions (Overall)	8,475 (6.2%)	1,118 (21.1%)	81,847 (93.8%)	4,182 (78.9%)
27	Discipline – Expulsions (with Educational Services)	8,475 (6.2%)	1,118 (21.1%)	81,847 (93.8%)	4,182 (78.9%)
28	Discipline – Expulsions (without Educational Services)	8,475 (6.2%)	1,118 (21.1%)	81,847 (93.8%)	4,182 (78.9%)
29	Discipline – Expulsions (Zero-tolerance Policies)	8,491 (9.4%)	1,121 (21.2%)	81,831 (90.6%)	4,179 (78.8%)

<sup>35</sup>The original number of charter schools presented in each row is actually a revised number based on removing certain schools that were determined to not be real charter schools. Please see the "Incorrect Charter School Identification" section for more details.

that information. As a result however, schools that had been removed due to privacy protection in the overall enrollment file also had to be removed from the discipline-related samples. In addition to removing schools due to privacy protection, it was also necessary to remove schools due to data incompleteness. The next section in Appendix A addresses the removal process. In the other sections that follow, more details about the data processing for each analysis are given.

## Decisions Related to Privacy-protected (<=2) and Missing/Incomplete Values

The CRDC included variables related to school status (i.e., charter vs. traditional public), and special education and related services. In analyzing the CRDC, it was necessary to make a number of decisions regarding how to analyze the data. One of the most important decisions related to how to deal with privacy-protected variables, generally captured in the data set as “<=2”, and incomplete or missing data, often marked by “+”, “-”, “n/a” and “M.”

It should be noted that there were 20 schools with the “+” symbol for their identification variables (e.g., special education, magnet, charter, etc.). Through online searches for each school, NCSECS determined that these 20 schools were charter schools and thus grouped them in with the other charter schools.<sup>36</sup> Of these 20 charter schools, 5 were removed in the overall enrollment analysis due to privacy-protection. In the specialized charter analysis, 2 of the 20 schools had more than 25% but less than 50% enrollment of students with disabilities. However, information was not available regarding whether these two schools self-identified as a specialized charter school and, therefore, these schools were not included on our list.

Complete case analysis is a standard method of dealing with missing data.<sup>37</sup> However, we were mindful of some of its drawbacks:

- The missing data may not be Missing Completely At Random (MCAR), meaning that the filtered sample could produce biased results.
- Requiring complete cases can result in removing a large percentage of the sample.

<sup>36</sup>Additionally, as will be explained in the section about the suspension data, it was discovered that these charter schools were only required to submit grade and enrollment information.

<sup>37</sup>Pigott, T. D. (2001). *A Review of Methods for Missing Data*. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 7, 353-383.

Although complete case analysis deletion often results in a substantial decrease in the sample size available for the analysis, it can still be useful in estimating the parameters of the population. If the number of missing cases is few, then it is more reasonable to assume that the data could be MCAR. Table A1 shows that in some analyses, the proportion of schools removed in one school category could range from 10% to 35%. While over 50% of the original sample was maintained in each analysis, the extent to which the data were or were not MCAR might have varied from one analysis to another. It is important to acknowledge then that some degree of bias may have been introduced, especially in the analyses where larger portions of the samples needed to be removed.

## Schools with Percentages of Enrollment by Students with Disabilities over 100%

After processing the main enrollment data, NCSECS noticed that 617 of the remaining schools had enrollment percentages of students with disabilities that were over 100%. Since the total enrollment variable was generally assumed to be the complete number of students at a school, it did not seem correct for the percentage of students with disabilities to be above 100%. The range of percentages spread from 101% to 200%, but the actual difference between the number of total enrollment and students with disabilities figures was never greater than 6. NCSECS contacted OCR in an effort to understand whether or not the records were incorrect. In response, OCR explained that an additional level of privacy-protection might be responsible for causing the abnormally high percentages of enrollment. More specifically, different rounding functions were used to calculate the total enrollment number and the total students with disabilities within those enrollment numbers. The 617 schools (593 traditional public schools and 24 charter schools) had their students with disabilities counts adjusted in order to ensure that the enrollment percentages would not exceed 100%. Specifically, any time a number of male or female students with disabilities was greater than the total number of male or female students enrolled, the number of students with disabilities was capped at the value of the total enrollment number (e.g., if there were 12 male students with disabilities but only 10 male students enrolled, the 12 was reduced to a 10). The adjustments made ensured that the number of male or female students with disabilities did not exceed the number of male or female students overall.

## Incorrect Charter School Identification

In addition to removing data due to privacy-protection, there were 9 schools that erroneously identified themselves as “charter schools” in 6 of the 11 states that did not allow charter schools in 2011–12. The six states were AL, MS, ND, NE, WA, and WV. We removed these schools from the analysis. The total enrollment of students at these schools amounted to 3,736, and the total enrollment of students with disabilities at these schools summed to 535.

In some cases NCSECS was able to determine that some schools were coded incorrectly as charter schools (i.e., Cora Kelly in Alexandria, VA; Connellsville Area Technical and Career Center in Connellsville, PA; Milford Preschool in Milford, OH; and Hillside Conant School in Atlanta, GA). NCSECS discovered these schools during the search for charter schools that had over 50% enrollment by students with disabilities. At these 4 schools, the total enrollment was 971 and the enrollment of students with disabilities was 725. After looking individually at each charter school that matched the enrollment criterion, NCSECS discerned through online searches that these four schools were not actually charter schools in the 2011–12 academic year. In total, the 13 schools incorrectly labeled as “charter schools” were removed from all of the analyses.

NCSECS did not, however, do a comprehensive check of all charter schools and traditional public schools, so there remains the possibility that other schools may be incorrectly coded in the CRDC.

## Hypothesis Testing

We performed hypothesis testing in order to determine if there was a significant difference between the core sample of schools and the removed group of schools. Since the exact number of students with disabilities at the removed schools was not known nor could be known, total enrollment numbers formed the basis of the testing.

We chose Welch’s *t*-test because it relaxes the assumption about equal variances between the two test groups.<sup>38</sup> The results of the tests showed there to be a very significant (a *p*-value of less than 0.01) difference.<sup>39</sup> Thus, we had to reject the null hypothesis that the sample of included schools and the sample of excluded schools were the same across both school categories. The implication of these results was that the schools in the final sample might be significantly larger on average than the schools that were

<sup>38</sup>Ruxton, G. D. (2006). The Unequal Variance *t*-test Is An Underused Alternative to Student’s *t*-test and the Mann-Whitney *U* test. *Behavioral Ecology*, 17(4), 688-690.

<sup>39</sup>Mann-Whitney *U* tests were also performed. The results similarly showed there to be significant differences.

**Table A2. Results of Hypothesis Testing for Schools Included and Excluded from the Main Enrollment Analysis Sample**

School Type	Mean of Included Schools	Mean of Excluded Schools	t-value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Traditional Public	570	126	162.96	17,524	<0.01
Charter	443	159	28.48	5,293	<0.01

removed. In essence, the analyses in this report may not properly account for schools (i.e., both traditional public and charter) that have smaller student populations in general and students with disabilities specifically.

## Enrollment Data Analyses

### Files used in CRDC:

“02 - School Characteristics”

“05 - Overall Enrollment”

For the analysis of enrollment data from the 2011–12 CRDC, we examined three variables – total enrollment, enrollment of students covered by IDEA, and enrollment of students covered by Section 504. The following CRDC variables were used in order to create the three main enrollment variables:

- *M\_TOT\_7\_ENROL / F\_TOT\_7\_ENROL* – male/female counts of total students enrolled at a school. There were no masks on these data, so values of 2 and below were shown as their actual values.
- *M\_DIS\_IDEA\_7\_ENROL / F\_DIS\_IDEA\_7\_ENROL* – male/female counts of students with disabilities eligible for IDEA coverage enrolled at a school. These data were subject to privacy-protection, so values of 2 and below were masked with a “<=2” value.
- *M\_DIS\_504\_7\_ENROL / F\_DIS\_504\_7\_ENROL* – male/female counts of students with disabilities eligible for Section 504 coverage enrolled at a school. These data did not have masks, so values of 2 and below were shown as their actual values.

The separation by gender caused the individual counts to be small, especially for the IDEA enrollment variables. The result then was that the data were privacy protected in many cases. Any school with privacy-protected data for either the male or female count of students was removed.

The total number of schools in the data set before any data removal was 95,622 (5,300 charter schools and 90,322

traditional public schools, as shown in Table A1). In total, there were 1,102 charter schools and 8,441 traditional public schools removed from the analysis. The total number of students removed in both categories was 1,299,802 (1,114,626 in traditional public schools and 185,176 in charter schools).

Although the charter schools in the enrollment analysis show descriptive statistics that are similar to those of the original group of charter schools (Table A3), both of those groups differ from the statistics of the removed charter schools. Notably, the average is lower in the group of removed charter schools. One reason why this might be the case is that schools with smaller enrollment would be more likely to have privacy-protection. Still, the number of total students at the removed charter schools is around 8.6%, so it does not account for the majority of students in charter schools. The results of the hypothesis testing on total enrollment numbers showed that there was a significant difference between the removed schools and the schools in the sample.

The summary statistics for traditional public schools (Table A4) show trends similar to the ones observed for

charter schools. The group of removed schools shows a smaller mean relative to the overall group, and the traditional public schools that were present in the analysis have a larger mean relative to the overall group. In comparison to charter schools, however, a relatively smaller portion of students was excluded from the analysis: 2.1% in traditional public schools vs. 8.6% in charter schools. The results of the hypothesis testing for total enrollment in traditional public schools also showed a significant difference between the removed schools and the ones included in the analysis.

One feature that the two the groups of schools have in common is a skewed-right distribution. In other words, the median is less than the mean and the majority of the enrollment values are on the left part of the distribution. Therefore, the mean is skewed to the right by a relatively small number of schools with higher enrollment sizes.

### Calculation of Percentages of Students with Disabilities Enrolled

This calculation is the following quotient: number of students covered by the IDEA divided by the total number of students enrolled. The calculation for Section 504 enrollment percentages is identical, save for the fact that the numerator is the number of students covered under Section 504, not the IDEA. As an example, students with disabilities in Colorado’s charter schools compose 6.44% of all students enrolled in the state’s charter schools, and students with disabilities eligible for IDEA coverage in Colorado’s traditional public schools compose 10.37% of all students enrolled in traditional public schools in Colorado. Table A5 shows the number of schools of each type in each state and the number of students enrolled. In Table A6, the values are the percentages of students with disabilities under the IDEA in traditional public schools and in charter schools by each state.

**Table A3. Summary Statistics – Charter Schools**

Statistics	All Charter Schools	Removed Charter Schools	Charter Schools in Enrollment Analysis
Number of Schools	5,300	1,102	4,198
Average Enrollment of Students	384	159	443
Median Enrollment of Students	277	109	326
Total Enrollment of Students	2,036,556	175,000 (8.6% of total)	1,861,556 (91.4% of total)
Enrollment of Students (1st Quartile)	146	54	191
Enrollment of Students (3rd Quartile)	468	206	523
Standard Deviation of Enrollment	526	156	571

**Table A4. Summary Statistics – Traditional Public Schools**

Statistics	All Traditional Public Schools	Removed Traditional Public Schools	Traditional Public Schools in Enrollment Analysis
Number of Schools	90,322	8,441	81,881
Average Enrollment of Students	528	126	570
Median Enrollment of Students	450	55	481
Total Enrollment of Students	47,714,795	1,065,696 (2.2% of total)	46,649,099 (97.8% of total)
Enrollment of Students (1st Quartile)	263	21	313
Enrollment of Students (3rd Quartile)	668	139	695
Standard Deviation of Enrollment	439	207	436

**Table A5. Summary of Student Enrollment Data and Number of Schools by State 2011-2012**

State	Traditional Public Schools – Total IDEA Students	Charter Schools – Total IDEA Students	Traditional Public Schools – All Students	Charter Schools – All Students	Total IDEA Enrollment	Total Enrollment	Number of Traditional Public Schools	Number of Charter Schools
AK	18,289	561	122,372	5,448	18,850	127,820	327	24
AL	87,101	-	720,962	-	87,101	720,962	1,323	-
AR	50,040	629	451,569	7,663	50,669	459,232	981	22
AZ	113,557	12,410	946,742	121,820	125,967	1,068,562	1,332	330
CA	587,390	28,937	5,726,417	353,996	616,327	6,080,413	7,750	693
CO	78,989	4,938	761,875	76,383	83,927	838,258	1,425	140
CT	65,615	461	549,549	5,583	66,076	555,132	1,051	19
DC	6,495	3,510	44,287	25,506	10,005	69,793	116	74
DE	18,979	888	122,332	7,620	19,867	129,952	198	17
FL	312,589	15,596	2,444,857	163,923	328,185	2,608,780	3,056	392
GA	170,578	8,492	1,589,324	87,422	179,070	1,676,746	2,166	117
HI	20,020	789	172,570	7,832	20,809	180,402	247	24
IA	59,306	180	462,008	1,070	59,486	463,078	1,244	3
ID	24,531	1,027	261,472	14,238	25,558	275,710	553	29
IL	267,594	5,806	1,984,815	48,354	273,400	2,033,169	3,846	45
IN	148,197	3,501	997,090	27,133	151,698	1,024,223	1,754	51
KS	63,240	112	469,428	1,394	63,352	470,822	1,259	5
KY	96,963	-	680,178	-	96,963	680,178	1,292	-
LA	68,097	3,384	633,545	37,794	71,481	671,339	1,216	77
MA	152,200	4,349	910,912	30,992	156,549	941,904	1,715	70
MD	92,274	3,144	828,679	22,090	95,418	850,769	1,335	61
ME	29,160	-	176,343	-	29,160	176,343	529	-
MI	190,220	10,199	1,414,051	106,642	200,419	1,520,693	2,909	240
MN	121,429	8,291	806,553	58,393	129,720	864,946	1,669	144
MO	120,184	1,237	886,234	13,553	121,421	899,787	2,082	32
MS	56,877	-	466,785	-	56,877	466,785	870	-
MT	14,480	-	127,315	-	14,480	127,315	417	-
NC	175,587	4,781	1,419,965	44,174	180,368	1,464,139	2,287	97
ND	13,156	-	93,098	-	13,156	93,098	342	-
NE	44,724	-	292,972	-	44,724	292,972	906	-
NH	27,985	57	177,554	359	28,042	177,913	411	3
NJ	200,597	2,056	1,302,602	22,462	202,653	1,325,064	2,308	59
NM	42,771	1,524	305,697	12,409	44,295	318,106	659	57
NV	46,403	1,551	417,741	16,491	47,954	434,232	539	30
NY	385,341	7,427	2,634,338	61,421	392,768	2,695,759	4,506	166
OH	239,290	16,270	1,676,098	92,945	255,560	1,769,043	3,287	273
OK	95,436	691	638,511	8,062	96,127	646,573	1,612	17
OR	70,972	2,240	527,363	23,785	73,212	551,148	1,099	85
PA	248,909	15,351	1,634,524	101,572	264,260	1,736,096	2,954	142
RI	20,192	556	131,761	4,221	20,748	135,982	270	14
SC	92,531	1,759	712,184	17,260	94,290	729,444	1,114	36
SD	14,716	-	114,389	-	14,716	114,389	379	-
TN	132,654	894	955,758	8,059	133,548	963,817	1,656	34
TX	429,319	10,795	4,767,333	145,618	440,114	4,912,951	7,184	386
UT	68,567	4,891	540,186	42,985	73,458	583,171	813	74
VA	164,903	130	1,262,258	701	165,033	1,262,959	1,911	5
VT	10,932	-	73,782	-	10,932	73,782	237	-
WA	118,505	-	1,014,976	-	118,505	1,014,976	1,916	-
WI	116,046	4,486	824,864	33,959	120,532	858,823	1,864	109
WV	46,500	-	281,897	-	46,500	281,897	693	-
WY	13,144	28	90,984	224	13,172	91,208	272	2
Grand Total	5,853,574	193,928	46,649,099	1,861,556	6,047,502	48,510,655	81,881	4,198

**Table A6. Percentage of Students with Disabilities by School Group**

State	Students with Disabilities % (Traditional Public Schools)	Students with Disabilities % (Charter Schools)	Difference
MA	16.71%	14.03%	2.68%
NH	15.76%	15.88%	-0.12%
DE	15.51%	11.65%	3.86%
NJ	15.40%	9.15%	6.25%
RI	15.32%	13.17%	2.15%
PA	15.23%	15.11%	0.11%
MN	15.06%	14.20%	0.86%
OK	14.95%	8.57%	6.38%
AK	14.95%	10.30%	4.65%
IN	14.86%	12.90%	1.96%
DC	14.67%	13.76%	0.90%
NY	14.63%	12.09%	2.54%
WY	14.45%	12.50%	1.95%
OH	14.28%	17.50%	-3.23%
WI	14.07%	13.21%	0.86%
NM	13.99%	12.28%	1.71%
TN	13.88%	11.09%	2.79%
MO	13.56%	9.13%	4.43%
IL	13.48%	12.01%	1.47%
KS	13.47%	8.03%	5.44%
OR	13.46%	9.42%	4.04%
MI	13.45%	9.56%	3.89%
VA	13.06%	18.54%	-5.48%
SC	12.99%	10.19%	2.80%
IA	12.84%	16.82%	-3.99%
FL	12.79%	9.51%	3.27%
UT	12.69%	11.38%	1.31%
NC	12.37%	10.82%	1.54%
AZ	11.99%	10.19%	1.81%
CT	11.94%	8.26%	3.68%
HI	11.60%	10.07%	1.53%
MD	11.14%	14.23%	-3.10%
NV	11.11%	9.41%	1.70%
AR	11.08%	8.21%	2.87%
LA	10.75%	8.95%	1.79%
GA	10.73%	9.71%	1.02%
CO	10.37%	6.46%	3.90%
CA	10.26%	8.17%	2.08%
ID	9.38%	7.21%	2.17%
TX	9.01%	7.41%	1.59%
NATION	12.55%	10.42%	2.13%

## Grade Profile Analysis

### Files used in CRDC:

“02 - School Characteristics”

“05 - Overall Enrollment”

Every school that had IDEA enrollment data was included in this analysis. Thus, this sample of schools reflects the same sample in the general enrollment analysis. Once the schools were collected, their corresponding grade profiles were determined. In order to classify each school according to one unique grade category, it was necessary to look at the grades offered at each school. Specific conditions were used in order to separate each school appropriately. The conditions were the result of some trial and error, since the grade configurations in the data did not neatly fit into what might be considered “standard.”

- *Elementary* – Having preschool grades was optional. A school in this category needed to have at least one grade in the “elementary” grade range: Grades 1–6. No grades above Grade 6 were allowed.
- *Middle* – A school in this category had at least two grades in the range from Grade 6–8. No grades below Grade 6 or above Grade 8 were allowed.
- *High* – A school in this category had at least one grade in the range from Grade 9–12. No grades below Grade 9 were allowed.
- *Preschool-Grade 8* – Having preschool grades was optional. A school in this category needed to have grades 1-5 and at least two grades from Grades 6–8. The more restrictive criteria were necessary to avoiding double counting. No grades above Grade 8 were allowed.
- *Grades 6-12* – A school in this category had at least one grade in the range from Grade 6–8 and also needed to have Grade 9. No grades below Grade 6 were allowed.
- *Preschool-Grade 12* – Having preschool grades was optional. A school in this category needed to have all of Grades 1–8 and at least two grades from Grades 9–12.
- *Other* – Any school that did not fall into any of the other categories was placed by default into this one.

The flexibility of the conditions allowed for the possibility of more growing schools (i.e., schools working towards full grade ranges) to be included in the appropriate categories. The end result of the number of different conditions was the elimination of overlap between the school categories. The reason why it was important to take out any overlap was because it would interfere with the precision of the enrollment statistics for each grade profile. The unique grade profiles served as the best proxy for having data by each grade specifically.

## Educational Environment Analysis

### Files used in CRDC:

*“ID 74 SCH - Educational Environment by Gender by Disability”*  
*“02 - School Characteristics”*

The CRDC file pertaining to educational environment contained information for 95,622 schools. After removing records with incomplete or privacy-protected data, the total number of remaining schools was 79,804. In this new total, there were 3,412 charter schools and 76,386 traditional public schools.

In order to gather as much data as possible while remaining conservative, our team first removed all records that did not contain data on any of the educational environment data variables. We also considered a more restrictive approach to the removal of records with privacy-protected data. With this other approach however, any record with at least one instance of privacy-protected data among the inclusion variables would be removed. The end result of this more restrictive methodology was to take away 93,521 (88,573 traditional public schools and 5,049 charter schools) of the schools in the CRDC. Since this number was so substantial, we decided instead to keep schools that had data for at least one of the inclusion variables. In rows with data for only one inclusion variable, the other inclusion variables would be set to a value of zero. It is possible that some undercounting may have occurred as a result.

The inclusion variables were as follows:

- **RC80\_M/RC80\_F** – The number of male/female students with disabilities in the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day.
- **RC79TO40\_M/RC79TO40\_F** – The number of male/female students with disabilities in the general education classroom from 40% to 79% of the school day.
- **RC39\_M/RC39\_F** – The number of male/female students with disabilities in the general education classroom for 39% or less of the school day.

Another variable, *Total Membership*, provided a total for the number of students with disabilities in each row of data. We discovered that this variable only contained a masked “<=2” value when all of the inclusion variables had values of “<=2”. When at least one of the inclusion variables had concrete data, the Total Membership variable did as well. We found that the number of Total Membership always equaled the number of students across the inclusion variables. It appeared then that even in rows with lots

of privacy-protection and few concrete values, the Total Membership value matched the sum of the concrete values. In cases where Total Membership had a numeric value, we concluded that the privacy-protected values corresponded to zeroes.

Total Membership also had values of “n/a”, “M”, and “-”, each of which represented a different type of data incompleteness. Any rows with these values were removed from the analysis.

- “n/a” meant that the data were not required and therefore were not submitted.
  - 1,736 schools had “n/a” values. Of those schools, 1,593 were traditional public schools and 143 were charter schools.
- “M” meant that the data were missing.
  - 4,425\* schools had “M” values. Of those schools, 3,869 were traditional public schools and 556 were charter schools.
- “-” referred to records that were orphaned. In this case, the entity in question may not have been part of the ESS (EDEN Submission System) and therefore could not submit data.
  - 4,182\* schools had “-” values. Of those schools, 3,505 were traditional public schools and 677 were charter schools.

*\* Three schools that had “M” values and one school that a “-” value happened to be part of the group of 13 incorrectly classified charter schools. Since those schools were removed from all of the analyses completely, their numbers were subtracted from the group totals.*

One of the possible reasons why the privacy protection was so extensive might have been that each row of data corresponded to a disability type at a school (i.e., one row could represent students with autism while another row would represent students with specific learning disabilities). The data were more disaggregated and thus more likely to have smaller enrollment numbers. If the data had been reported at an aggregated level for each school, the numbers for each inclusion category might have been higher and might not have merited privacy-protection.

## Discipline Analysis: Suspensions<sup>40</sup>

### Files used in CRDC:

“02 – School Characteristics”

“05 – Overall Enrollment”

“35-3 – Students Without Disabilities Receiving only one out-of-school suspension”

“35-4 – Students Without Disabilities Receiving more than one out-of-school suspension”

“36-3 – Students With Disabilities Receiving only one out-of-school suspension”

“36-4 – Students With Disabilities Receiving more than one out-of-school suspension”

Although the suspension data were not affected by privacy-protection, there were instances of missing values. There were 114 schools removed in total: 93 traditional public schools and 21 charter schools. Each of the 114 schools had a corresponding code – A, B, or C – that explained the reasons (all approved by OCR) for why the data were incomplete:

### Data incompleteness code definitions

- “A” referred to an LEA or school that received an exemption from providing data for a given data file.
- “B” referred to a charter LEA or school that provided and certified grades and enrollment data only.
- “C” referred to an LEA or school that provided all or partial data which were not subject to all quality checks but were nonetheless certified by the LEA.

### Counts of schools with each code

- “A” – There were 81 schools that had this code; all of them were traditional public schools.
- “B” – All of the 20 schools with this code were charter schools. It should be noted that these 20 charter schools are the same ones that had the “‡” symbol in other data files. If these schools only needed to provide grade information and enrollment data, that explains why the symbols were used for other pieces of information (such as school type).
- “C” – Of the 13 schools with this code, 12 were traditional public schools and 1 was a charter school.

Some suspension data files contained more than 114 schools with incomplete data codes. However, the other schools had missing data for variables that were not used. The 114 schools removed from the analysis had incomplete data for the male and female totals across the files for students without disabilities and students with disabilities.

After removing the schools with missing data, information from several variables was collected in order to amass the overall suspension numbers for both school groups:

- (File 35-3): *M\_TOT\_7\_SINGLE\_SUS\_NO\_DIS / F\_TOT\_7\_SINGLE\_SUS\_NO\_DIS* – the counts of male/female students without disabilities that had a single out-of-school suspension.
- (File 35-4): *M\_TOT\_7\_MULT\_SUS\_NO\_DIS / F\_TOT\_7\_MULT\_SUS\_NO\_DIS* – the counts of male/female students without disabilities that had more than one out-of-school suspension.
- (File 36-3): *M\_TOT\_IDEA\_7\_SINGLE\_SUS\_DIS / F\_TOT\_IDEA\_7\_SINGLE\_SUS\_DIS* – the counts of male/female students with disabilities that had a single out-of-school suspension.
- (File 36-4): *M\_TOT\_IDEA\_7\_MULT\_SUS\_DIS / F\_TOT\_IDEA\_7\_MULT\_SUS\_DIS* – the counts of male/female students with disabilities that had more than one out-of-school suspension.

Although the number of schools with data was 95,508 (90,229 traditional public schools and 5,279 charter schools), this number decreased because it was necessary to link the schools with data regarding enrollment by students with disabilities. 9,525 schools (8,428 traditional public schools and 1,097 charter schools) were removed as a result of privacy-protected data. The schools that remained were paired with their corresponding total and IDEA enrollment numbers. From these numbers, the different suspension rates were calculated:

- *Suspension rate of all students* – the result of all students suspended divided by the total enrollment.
- *Suspension rate of students without disabilities* – the result of all students with disabilities divided by the difference between total enrollment and IDEA enrollment.
- *Suspension rate of students with disabilities* – the result of all students with disabilities divided by the IDEA enrollment.

<sup>40</sup>For both the suspensions analysis and the expulsion analysis, the general and IDEA enrollment numbers came from the main enrollment analysis.



## Discipline Analysis: Expulsions

### **Files used in CRDC:**

“02 - School Characteristics”

“05 - Overall Enrollment”

“35-5: Students Without Disabilities Expulsions with educational services”

“35-6: Students Without Disabilities Expulsions without educational services”

“35-7: Students Without Disabilities Expulsions under zero-tolerance policies”

“36-5: Students With Disabilities Expulsions with educational services”

“36-6: Students With Disabilities Expulsions without educational services”

“36-7: Students With Disabilities Expulsions under zero-tolerance policies”

The CRDC separates expulsion data into three categories. Similar to the suspension data, there are files that contain data only on students without disabilities and other files that contain data only on students with disabilities. Thus, there were six files in total to be used. The counts of students were separated by gender, so they were combined.

For instance, in file 36-5 the following variables were combined in order to find the total number of expulsions for students with disabilities in the With Educational Services category: *M\_TOT\_IDEA\_7\_EXP\_SERV\_DIS* and *F\_TOT\_IDEA\_7\_EXP\_SERV\_DIS*. In contrast to many other files in the CRDC, however, values of 2 or lower were not marked with the “<=2” that indicates the presence of privacy-protection. The only issue then with combining the data across the genders was data incompleteness, which was marked with the cross symbol (“†”) discussed before.

The number of schools across the files that had incomplete data for the variables discussed above was determined. In the end, 65 schools (44 traditional public schools and 21 charter schools) were removed in the case of the educational services-related expulsion data and 83 (59 traditional public schools and 24 charter schools) were removed in the case of zero-tolerance-related expulsion data. Similar to the suspension data, these schools had different codes corresponding to different reasons behind the data incompleteness (the meaning of each code is the same as each one described in the explanation of the suspension analysis):

### **Data incompleteness code definitions**

- “A” referred to an LEA or school that received an exemption from providing data for a given data file.
- “B” referred to a charter LEA or school that provided and certified grades and enrollment data only.
- “C” referred to an LEA or school that provided all or partial data which were not subject to all quality checks but were nonetheless certified by the LEA.

### **Educational services-related expulsion data**

- “A” – There were 34 schools that had this code; all of them were traditional public schools.
- “B” – All of the 20 schools with this code were charter schools.
- “C” – Of the 11 schools with this code, 10 were traditional public schools and 1 was a charter school.

### **Zero-tolerance policies expulsion data**

- “A” – There were 51 schools that had this code; all of them were traditional public schools.
- “B” – All of the 20 schools with this code were charter schools.
- “C” – Of the 12 schools with this code, 11 were traditional public schools and 1 was a charter school.

The total enrollment numbers came from the overall enrollment file. However, due to the need to separate the enrollment into two groups (students without disabilities and students with disabilities), it was necessary to filter out those schools for which the number of students with disabilities could not be calculated. There was some overlap between the schools with incomplete data outlined above and the schools with privacy-protection in the overall enrollment file.

10 of the 44 traditional public schools and 5 of the 21 charter schools in the educational services-related data sample were schools with privacy-protected data. Thus, the total number of schools removed due to data incompleteness was 50 (34 traditional public schools + 16 charter schools). The total number of schools removed to privacy-protection was 9,543 (8,441 traditional public schools and 1,102 charter schools). Combined, the two groups of removed schools resulted in a total of 9,593 schools (8,441 traditional public schools and 1,118 charter schools) that were removed.

The determination of the removed schools from the sample regarding zero-tolerance expulsions is the same.

59 traditional public schools and 24 charter schools were marked as having incomplete data in the zero-tolerance policies expulsion data files, but 9 of the traditional public schools and 5 of the charter schools were also marked as being privacy-protected in the overall enrollment file. Thus, the total number of schools removed due to data incompleteness was 69 (50 traditional public schools + 19 charter schools). The total number of schools removed due to privacy protection was 9,612 (8,491 traditional public schools and 1,121 charter schools).

Below are the formulas for the different expulsion rates presented in the report. The total enrollment figure differed depending on the student group in question (all students, students without disabilities, and students with disabilities). Additionally, the “All Expulsions” group discussed in the report used data from the two educational services-related expulsion groups. Data related to expulsions from zero-tolerance policies were not included because there was the potential for double counting; a student might be counted for an expulsion with educational services and then counted again under zero-tolerance policies, for instance.

- *Expulsion rate for students expelled overall* – the result of all students expelled with or without educational services divided by the total enrollment number corresponding to the student group (all students, students without disabilities, students with disabilities).
- *Expulsion rate for students expelled with educational services* – the result of all students expelled with educational services divided by the total enrollment number corresponding to the student group (all students, students without disabilities, students with disabilities).
- *Expulsion rate of students expelled without educational services* – the result of all students expelled without educational services divided by the total enrollment number corresponding to the student group (all students, students without disabilities, students with disabilities).
- *Expulsion rate of students expelled under zero-tolerance policies* – the result of all students expelled under zero-tolerance policies divided by the total enrollment number corresponding to the student group (all students, students without disabilities, students with disabilities).

## Specialized Charter Identification Methodology

Starting from the list of schools covered in the Mead report,<sup>41</sup> NCSECS verified that those schools were specialized or not based primarily on information that was publicly available (e.g., school websites). Other methods of specialized school discovery included the use of special keywords through Google News Alerts to collect news on specialized charter schools. Lastly, a comparison of the schools found in the CRDC and the existing specialized charter list allowed for more schools to be added.

The definition of what is or is not a specialized charter school seems to vary. According to the 2011-12 CRDC, the definition of a specialized school is based on the following question:<sup>42</sup>

*Does this school focus primarily on serving the needs of students with disabilities? (Yes/No)*

As discussed in the report, several lists from the CRDC were generated based on the criteria of self-identification and the proportion of students with disabilities enrolled. The reason why two criteria were necessary was because of the ambiguity in the definition of a specialized school.

In the end, NCSECS decided the following:

- If a school self-identified as a specialized school, then it needed to have 25% or higher enrollment by students with disabilities eligible for services under IDEA. We chose this figure because it was slightly more than twice the national average (12.47%). 85 schools met these criteria.
  - Of these 87 schools, 66 were already in NCSECS’s specialized charter school list. Not all of the 21 schools missing from the NCSECS list were added, however. Only 15 schools were added. The remaining 6 schools did not join the NCSECS list for various reasons: school closure, a school no longer identified as being specialized, etc.
- If a school had 50% or higher enrollment by students with disabilities eligible for coverage under IDEA, it could be marked as a potentially specialized school; 32 schools met these criteria.
  - Of the 32 schools, 10 were on the original NCSECS list. Of the 22 schools not on the original NCSECS list, only 8 were added. The remaining 14 schools

<sup>41</sup>Mead (2008).

<sup>42</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)* [2011-12 CRDC Table Layouts with Definitions]. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/data.html?src=rt/> (accessed July 31, 2015).

did not join the NCSECS list for reasons similar to the ones mentioned above. One additional reason for why some of the schools were excluded was that some of the charter schools (the four schools mentioned specifically in the incorrect charter school classification section earlier in Appendix A) were not actually charter schools.

In total, 23 new specialized schools were discovered in the CRDC and added to the specialized charter school list. Out of the 115 specialized charter schools on NCSECS's list, only 102 appeared in the CRDC. Reasons for the absence of a school from the CRDC included the fact that a particular school may not have been in operation during the 2011-2012 academic year. Out of the 102 specialized charter schools that appeared in the CRDC, 3 schools had privacy-protected data.

Looking at only the 99 schools that had complete CRDC data, 80 of them self-identified as specialized schools. Among the 19 schools included in our list that did not self-identify, the average enrollment rate of students with disabilities was 71.96%. The lowest observed rate was 50.00%, whereas the highest one was 100.00%. Despite choosing to answer "No" on the CRDC questionnaire, these 19 schools had significantly higher than average (relative to the national average of 12.54%) enrollment of students with disabilities.

Once the school list was finalized, NCSECS examined publicly available information such as each school's website in order to determine the disability focus of the schools. A disability focus was defined as a disability category (or group of categories) that appeared to be a priority for a school. If a school's website was not adequate to determine its classification (as specialized or general education focused) or its disability focus, NCSECS made phone calls to the school or sent emails to school administrators.

In other cases where a school's categorization was not clear from the CRDC or the school's site, the school search resource on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) site proved useful. However, there were some instances in which the NCES categorization differed from the one present in the CRDC. In these cases, NCSECS used the following list of priorities:

- If a school's categorization as a special education-focused school was in contention, then the team deferred to the percentage of the school's enrollment of students with disabilities. If the percentage was 50% or higher, then the school was marked as a potential specialized charter school.
  - In one instance of privacy-protection, the school's website was referenced in order to confirm its status as a specialized school.
- If the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled was under 50% and if the school's categorization was in contention between the CRDC and NCES, then school websites were referenced and cited. In one case the charter's identification was confirmed through making a phone call or communicating via email.



## Appendix B: Specialized Charter Schools



### Table key:

NCD – No CRDC Data Available

NYO – Not Yet Open (relative to the 2011-12 academic year)

PPD – Privacy-protected Data

School Name	City	State	IDEA Category	Sources <sup>43</sup>	Total Enrollment (2011-2012)	Percentage of Students with Disabilities
Autism Model School	Toledo	OH	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	97	100.00%
Easter Seals Charter – Daytona	Daytona Beach	FL	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	47	100.00%
Oakstone Academy/Community School	Columbus	OH	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	41	100.00%
Our Children's Academy	Lake Wales	FL	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	172	100.00%
Renaissance Learning Academy Charter High School	West Palm Beach	FL	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	58	100.00%
Sequoia School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Mesa	AZ	Deaf-blindness	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	68	100.00%
Summit Academy Secondary School – Middletown	Middletown	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	50	100.00%
Early Beginnings Academy Civic Center	Miami	FL	Developmental delay	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	143	99.30%
Palm Beach School for Autism	Lake Worth	FL	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	143	98.60%
St. Coletta Special Education Charter School	Washington	DC	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	237	98.31%
Believers Academy	West Palm Beach	FL	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	115	98.26%
Autism Academy of Learning	Toledo	OH	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	56	98.21%
Summit Academy Transition High School – Columbus	Columbus	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	56	98.21%
Renaissance Learning Center	West Palm Beach	FL	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	98	97.96%
Foundation School for Autism	San Antonio	TX	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	46	97.83%
Ed Venture Charter School	Hypoluxo	FL	Emotional disturbance	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	116	97.41%
Pepin Transitional School	Tampa	FL	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	70	97.14%
South Florida Autism Charter School	Hialeah	FL	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	98	96.94%
Summit Academy Community School – Warren	Warren	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	99	95.96%
Lionsgate Academy	Crystal	MN	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	146	95.89%
Gulfstream L.I.F.E Academy	Boynton Beach	FL	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	95	95.79%
Outreach Academy for Students with Disabilities	Mantua	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	46	95.65%
Mollie Kessler School	Youngstown	OH	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	65	95.38%
Pepin Elementary School	Tampa	FL	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	84	95.24%

<sup>43</sup>The Mead report can be found at the link in Footnote 27. The CRDC's site is the following: <http://ocrdata.ed.gov>.

School Name	City	State	IDEA Category	Sources <sup>43</sup>	Total Enrollment (2011-2012)	Percentage of Students with Disabilities
Goodwill LIFE Academy	Fort Myers	FL	Intellectual disabilities	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	39	94.87%
Metro Deaf School	St. Paul	MN	Deaf-blindness	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	94	94.68%
Spectrum Charter School, Inc.	Monroeville	PA	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	34	94.12%
Summit Academy Middle School – Columbus	Columbus	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	2011-12 CRDC	49	93.88%
Meyer Center for Special Children	Greenville	SC	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	48	93.75%
Seagull Academy for Independent Living	West Palm Beach	FL	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	63	93.65%
Transitional Learning Charter School	Santa Clarita	CA	General spectrum	2011-12 CRDC	76	93.42%
Pepin Academy of Tampa <sup>44</sup>	Tampa	FL	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	154	92.86%
Potentials Charter Schools	Riviera Beach	FL	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	27	92.59%
Summit Academy Secondary School – Akron	Akron	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	63	92.06%
Pepin Middle School	Tampa	FL	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	120	91.67%
Summit Academy Community School – Painesville	Painesville	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	94	91.49%
Summit Academy Community School for Alternative Learners – Warren Middle and Secondary	Warren	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	91	91.21%
Summit Academy Transition High School – Cincinnati	Cincinnati	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	93	90.32%
Summit Academy Secondary School - Youngstown	Youngstown	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	166	89.76%
Summit Academy Community School for Alternative Learners – Lorain	Lorain	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	136	89.71%
Pattison's Academy for Comprehensive Education	Charleston	SC	Multiple disabilities	NCSECS Research; 2011-12 CRDC	29	89.66%
Summit Academy Community School for Alternative Learners – Middletown	Middletown	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	106	89.62%
Summit Academy Secondary School – Lorain	Lorain	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	73	89.04%
New York Center for Autism Charter School	New York	NY	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	36	88.89%
Summit Academy Middle School – Lorain	Lorain	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	78	87.18%
Chautauqua Learn and Serve	Panama City	FL	Developmental delay	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	44	86.36%
UCP Child Development Center – Osceola	Kissimmee	FL	Developmental delay	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	65	86.15%
Fraser Academy	Minneapolis	MN	General spectrum	2011-12 CRDC	79	86.08%
Summit Academy Community School for Alternative Learners	Canton	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	90	85.56%
The Hope Center for Autism	Jensen Beach	FL	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	34	85.29%
Summit Academy Community School – Cincinnati	Cincinnati	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	119	84.87%
Arc of St Johns	St. Augustine	FL	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	13	84.62%

<sup>44</sup>The Pepin Academy of Tampa and the Pepin Transitional School both offer grade ranges of 9-12. However, they are separate schools according to the CRDC.

School Name	City	State	IDEA Category	Sources <sup>43</sup>	Total Enrollment (2011–2012)	Percentage of Students with Disabilities
Summit Academy – Youngstown	Youngstown	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	166	84.34%
Summit Academy Community School – Parma	Parma	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	217	83.87%
Summit Academy Akron Middle School	Akron	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	93	82.80%
UCP Transitional Learning Academy High School	Orlando	FL	Developmental delay	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	23	82.61%
Summit Academy Community School for Alternative Learners – Xenia	Xenia	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	113	81.42%
Lighthouse Community School	Cincinnati	OH	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	43	81.40%
Hill Country Youth Ranch	Ingram	TX	Emotional disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	104	79.81%
Summit Academy Secondary School – Toledo	Toledo	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	217	79.72%
Summit Academy Secondary School – Canton	Canton	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	68	77.94%
Summit Academy Community School – Dayton	Dayton	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	103	77.67%
Capstone Academy (Pensacola)	Pensacola	FL	Developmental delay	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	26	76.92%
Florida Autism Charter School of Excellence	Tampa	FL	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	81	76.54%
Summit Academy Community School – Columbus	Columbus	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	50	76.00%
Rocky Mountain Deaf School	Golden	CO	Deaf-blindness	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	62	75.81%
Summit Academy Community School – Toledo	Toledo	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	78	75.64%
Capstone Academy (Milton)	Milton	FL	Developmental delay	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	23	73.91%
Achievement Academy	Lakeland	FL	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	90	72.22%
Azleway Charter School Willow Bend	Tyler	TX	Emotional disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	43	72.09%
UCP Pine Hills Charter School	Orlando	FL	Developmental Delay	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	57	71.93%
UCP East Orlando – Bailes Campus	Orlando	FL	Developmental delay	2011-12 CRDC	171	71.35%
Options PCS	Washington DC	DC	General spectrum	2011-12 CRDC	403	68.24%
Einstein Montessori School	Cocoa	FL	Specific learning disabilities	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	106	66.98%
Summit Academy Transition High School – Dayton	Dayton	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	75	66.67%
San Marcos Charter School	San Marcos	TX	General spectrum	2011-12 CRDC	158	65.82%
Trinity Charter Schools – Krause Campus	Katy	TX	Emotional Disturbance	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	77	63.64%
Dr. Robert Ketterer Charter School	Latrobe	PA	Two or More IDEA Categories	2011-12 CRDC	201	60.70%
Spectrum Academy	North Salt Lake City	UT	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	635	59.37%
Montessori Academy of Early Enrichment, INC	Greenacres	FL	General spectrum	2011-12 CRDC	145	59.31%
Positive Outcomes Charter School	Camden	DE	Emotional disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	131	58.78%
Virtual Schoolhouse	Cleveland	OH	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	392	58.67%
Helping Hand – UT Charter School	Austin	TX	Emotional Disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	24	58.33%
Afton Oaks	San Antonio	TX	Emotional disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	128	57.81%

School Name	City	State	IDEA Category	Sources <sup>43</sup>	Total Enrollment (2011–2012)	Percentage of Students with Disabilities
Gateway Lab School	Wilmington	DE	General spectrum	NCSECS Research; 2011-12 CRDC	228	57.46%
Child Development Center of the Hamptons	Wainscott	NY	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	78	56.41%
New Horizons	Goldthwaite	TX	Emotional disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	57	56.14%
Settlement Home	Austin	TX	Emotional disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	29	55.17%
Blanche Kelso Bruce Academy – St. Jude’s	Detroit	MI	General spectrum	2011-12 CRDC	13	53.85%
Williams House	Lometa	TX	Emotional Disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	33	51.52%
The Tomorrow Center	Edison	OH	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	51	50.98%
Big Springs Charter School	Leakey	TX	General spectrum	2011-12 CRDC	75	50.67%
Pathfinder Camp	Driftwood	TX	Emotional disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	20	50.00%
Trinity Charter Schools – New Life Campus	Canyon Lake	TX	Emotional Disturbance	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	52	50.00%
UCP Transitional Learning Academy	Orlando	FL	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	16	50.00%
Grandfather Academy	Banner Elk	NC	Emotional Disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	38	36.84%
Another Choice Virtual Charter School	Nampa	ID	General spectrum	2011-12 CRDC	304	34.21%
Clara B. Ford Academy	Dearborn Heights	MI	Emotional disturbance	2011-12 CRDC	164	33.54%
ABQ Sign Language Academy	Albuquerque	NM	Deaf-blindness	2011-12 CRDC	64	26.56%
Access Charter	Orlando	FL	Autism	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	PPD	PPD
Children’s Guild	Washington	DC	Two or More IDEA Categories	NCSECS Research	NYO	NYO
Damar Charter Academy	Indianapolis	ID	Two or More IDEA Categories	NCSECS Research	NCD	NCD
Dynamic Community Charter School	Raleigh	NC	Two or More IDEA Categories	NCSECS Research	NCD	NCD
Easter Seals Charter School	Deland	FL	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008)	NCD	NCD
Learning Path Academy	West Palm Beach	FL	Specific learning disabilities	NCSECS Research	NCD	NCD
Louisiana Key Academy	Baton Rouge	LA	Specific learning disabilities	NCSECS Research	NYO	NYO
Macomb Academy	Clinton Township	MI	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	PPD	PPD
Manitowoc County Comprehensive Charter School	Manitowoc	WI	General spectrum	Mead (2008); 2011-12 CRDC	PPD	PPD
Monument Academy	Washington	DC	General spectrum	NCSECS Research	NYO	NYO
Richmond Career Education and Employment Academy	Richmond	VA	Intellectual disabilities	NCSECS Research	NCD	NCD
Summit Academy Akron Elementary School	Akron	OH	Two or More IDEA Categories	Mead (2008)	NCD	NCD
The Hope Charter Schools	Ocoee	FL	Autism	Mead (2008)	NCD	NCD
Trinity Charter Schools – Pegasus Campus	Lockhart	TX	Emotional Disturbance	Mead (2008)	NCD	NCD
UCP of Central Florida – Holloway	Orlando	FL	Developmental delay	Mead (2008)	NCD	NCD
Youth Academy Charter School	Kingstree	SC	General spectrum	Mead (2008)	NCD	NCD



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