

Data Bulletin

Connecticut's Children with Disabilities, Ages 3 through 5

Bureau of Student Assessment and Research

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Special education and related services are mandated by federal and state law for children with disabilities, ages 3 through 5, in order to provide them a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in accordance with their individual needs. In Connecticut, special education and related services are provided to eligible preschool and kindergarten-aged children through the state's local and regional school districts and the State Department of Children and Families, Unified School District #2.

Children, ages 3 through 5, may be eligible for special education based upon precise and distinct categories of disabilities as identified by federal and state law. The disability categories include: intellectual disability (e.g., mental retardation), hearing impairment (including deafness), speech or language impairment, visual impairment (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness or multiple disabilities. For young children, in Connecticut ages 3 through 5, there is an additional disability category called *developmental delay*. Developmental delay is defined as a significant developmental delay in one or more areas of development, including: physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional, or adaptive development.

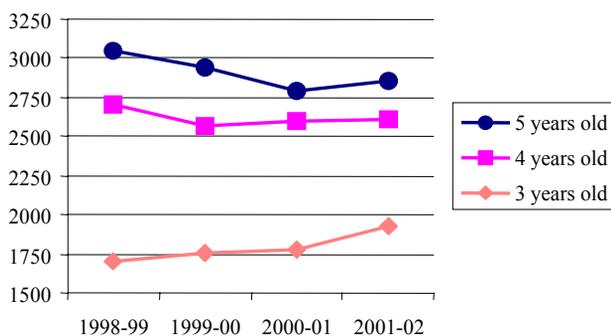
How Many Connecticut 3- Through 5-Year-Old Children Receive Special Education and Related Services?

A total of 7,390 children, 3-, 4- and 5-years of age, received special education and related services in the 2001-2002 school year. The identification rate for this age group in Connecticut was 5.3% in 2001-02, up from 5.14% in the previous year. The identification rate for children, ages 3 through 5, was calculated using 2000 Census data which compared all children in that age group within Connecticut's general population to the number of similar age children receiving special education services.

National data place Connecticut slightly above the U.S. average identification rate of 5.05% (1999-2000). National trend data also indicate an increase in the number of 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children identified and receiving special education and related services throughout the U.S.

Connecticut does provide a statewide early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities through the Connecticut Birth to Three System. Annually, approximately 84% of the 3-year-old children with disabilities receiving special education and related services also received services in the Connecticut Birth to Three System.

Number of Students with Disabilities, Ages 3-5, Served by Age and Year



Prevalence of Special Education

	3-5 Count	CT 3-5 Prev.	U.S. 3-5 Prev.	6-21 Count	CT 6-21 Prev.	U.S. 6-21 Prev.
2001-02	7,390	5.30%	not available	66,627	9.06%	not available
2000-01	7,172	5.14%	available	66,715	9.08%	available
1999-00	7,275	5.40%	5.05%	67,447	9.41%	8.92%
1998-99	7,461	5.71%	4.90%	69,297	10.06%	8.82%
1997-98	7,458	5.56%	4.79%	69,533	10.22%	8.75%

Trend data show a five-year decline in the number and prevalence of students, ages 6-21, receiving services. A similar trend was evident for children, ages 3-5, until recently. Enrollment data for the 2001-02 school year, indicate an increase in the number of preschool and kindergarten-aged children receiving special education.

What Are the Characteristics of These Children, Ages 3-5, with Disabilities?

Disability Type All 3- through 5-year-olds	1998	1999	2000	2001	2001 Percent
Learning Disabled	145	116	113	54	0.7%
Intellectually Disabled	51	31	50	48	0.6%
Emotional Disturbance	24	20	30	21	0.3%
Speech Impaired	2,485	2,507	2,583	2,698	36.5%
Visually Impaired	36	31	36	41	0.6%
Orthopedic Impairment	32	33	30	40	0.5%
Deaf-Blindness	13	6	2	2	0.0%
Hearing Impaired	70	78	80	80	1.1%
Traumatic Brain Injury	3	3	3	4	0.1%
Autism	114	138	152	173	2.3%
Other Health Impaired	116	98	110	107	1.4%
Multiple Disabilities	95	102	95	93	1.3%
Developmentally Delayed	4,259	4,077	3,847	3,980	53.9%
ADD/ADHD	na	15	8	12	0.2%
Neurologically Impaired	na	20	33	37	0.5%
Total	7,443	7,275	7,172	7,390	100.0%

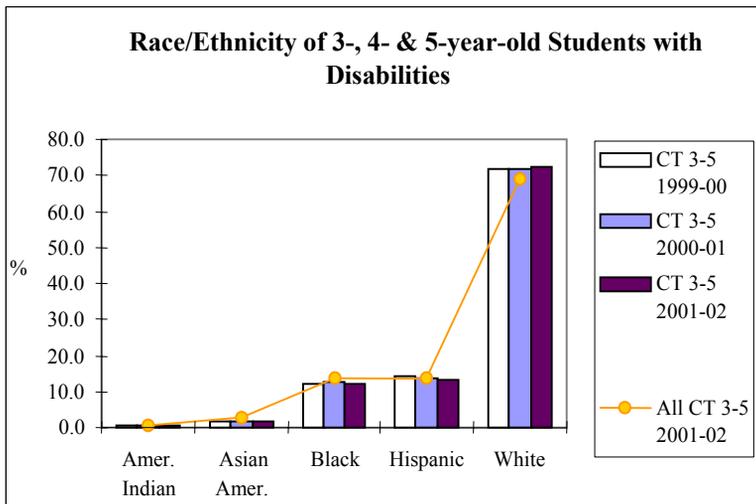
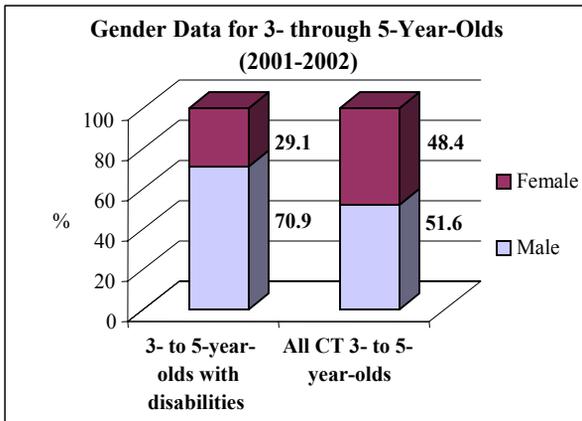
The table to the left shows a count of children with disabilities, ages 3-5, served over the last four years. Children with developmental delay and speech impairment comprise over 90% of all 3- through 5-year-olds receiving special education and related services.

The identification of children's primary disability for 3- through 5-year-olds has remained steady for the last four years except for the disability category of autism. The number of children ages 3-5 diagnosed with autism has increased by 50% since 1998. Experts believe this increase is due to factors that include (1) a broader definition of autism to include autism spectrum disorders, (2) better training in identification and early identification of the disorder by parents and professionals, and (3) an improved expertise in the ability to recognize and identify a spectrum of autism disorders.

The gender ratio for students with disabilities shows a higher identification of males. This is true for the 3-5 and the 6-21 age groups.

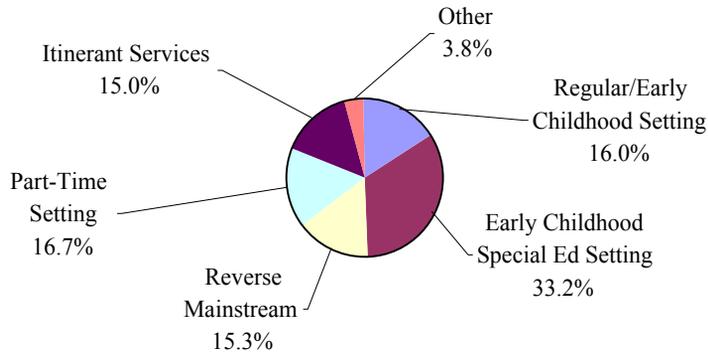
The data regarding the race/ethnicity of 3- through 5-year-olds receiving special education and related services presents a fairly consistent picture across three years of data. Trend data in race/ethnicity reflects an overidentification of children who are Caucasian/white in Connecticut, as compared to their non-disabled peers of similar age.

Asian-American 3- through 5-year-olds are identified with disabilities at one-half their prevalence rate in the state population. The number of 3- through 5-year-old African-American/Black children with disabilities continues to represent 1½ percentage points less than their population in the state. Identification rates for children with disabilities of Hispanic descent, ages 3-5, have been dropping for the past three years and are currently on target with their statewide prevalence. Race and ethnicity data compared to the population in the state does not appear to significantly over-represent any population other than White. Connecticut is identifying 3- through 5-year-old children with disabilities who are white at a rate 3% higher than the prevalence of their non-disabled white peers in the state.



In What Kinds of Educational Settings Do Children with Disabilities, Ages 3-5, Receive Services?

Educational Setting of Services for 3- through 5-Year-Old Students with Disabilities (2001-02)



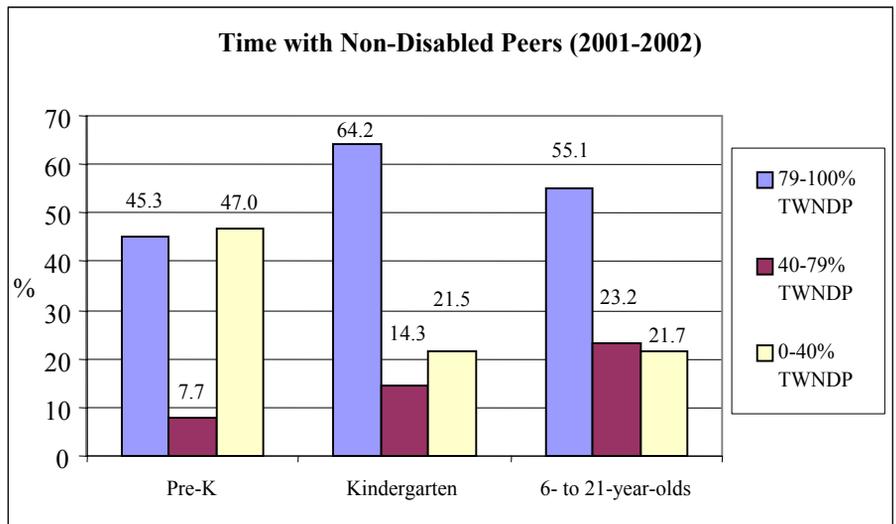
Educational Setting

The educational settings that provide the greatest amount of time with non-disabled peers include: Early Childhood Settings (defined as programs specifically designed for children without disabilities); Reverse Mainstream Settings (defined as programs designed for children with disabilities that include a minimum of 50% children without disabilities); and Itinerant Services (defined as special education and/or related services delivered in any setting except the home for no more than three hours per week). Forty-six percent of children with disabilities, ages 3-5, receive their services in early childhood settings, reverse mainstream settings or receive itinerant services in a variety of locations. Additionally, over 90% of all 3-, 4- & 5-year-old children with disabilities are educated within their local districts. This trend has been evident for the past four years.

Time with Non-Disabled Peers (TWNDP)

Trend data reflect an increase in the number of children, ages 3-5, with disabilities who received their special education and related services in settings with their non-disabled peers, particularly early childhood settings (spending 79-100% of time with non-disabled peers). In the 1999-2000 school year, 45.4% of children with disabilities, 3- through 5-years of age, spent 79-100% of their time with non-disabled peers. The percentage as of the 2001-2002 school year showed an increase to 52.3% for all children with disabilities, 3- through 5-years of age. Trend data indicate that children with disabilities, 3- through 5-years-old, are spending more time with their non-disabled peers than in previous years.

Trend data on time with non-disabled peers for children with disabilities reflects a different picture when separated by grade. The table to the right shows kindergarten children with disabilities spending more time with their non-disabled peers than either the preschool (ages 3 and 4) or school-aged (6 through 21) population of children with disabilities. There are and will continue to be concerted efforts by the State Department of Education to ensure that students are educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. These efforts include increasing the opportunity and options specifically for preschool populations.



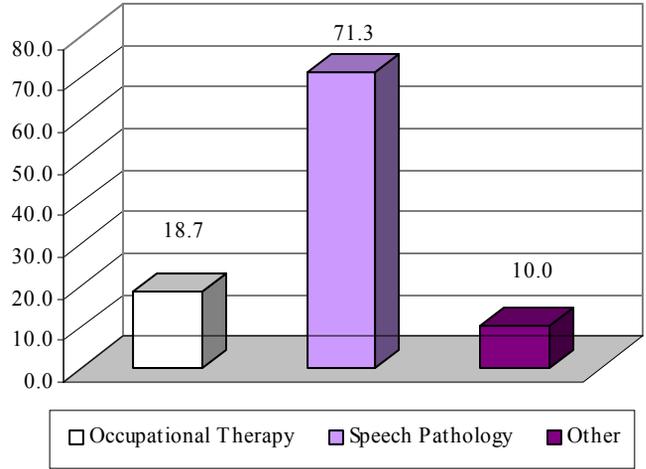
What Kinds of Services Do Children with Disabilities, Ages 3-5, Receive?

Related Services

Children, ages 3-5, with disabilities receive related services in addition to their special education instruction. Districts can report up to two related services that are provided to each child. The most common types of services provided to 3- through 5-year-old children with disabilities can be seen in the table to the right. Speech and Occupational Therapy are the most common related services provided to children. ‘Other’ services include transportation, counseling, interpreters, social workers, physical therapy and psychiatric services.

Of the 7,390 3- through 5-year-old children with disabilities, 3,662 (50%) receive one related service. There were 1,781 (24%) children for whom a 2nd related service was reported. The most frequent 2nd related service provided was occupational therapy.

Related Services #1



Speech & Language Pathologist	918	32.0%	6.8%
School Psychologist	823	15.4%	0.6%
School Social Worker	666	14.9%	0.6%
<i>All State Pupil Services Staff</i>	3,717		
Specific Learning Disabled	3,237	5.1%	2.8%
Intellectual Disability	570	7.7%	6.3%
Other Disability	469	30.7%	24.7%

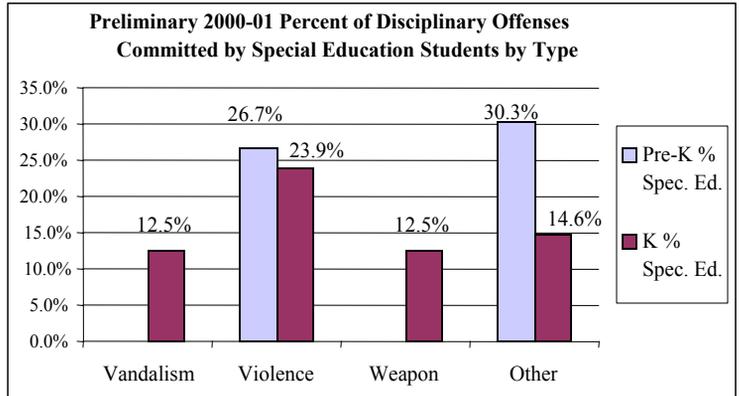
Staff

Of the 7,390 children, ages 3-5, 5,309 work with speech & language pathologists. Approximately 53.9% of 3- through 5-year-olds receive their primary services from instructional staff members, whose primary teaching assignment is Other Disability. This sheds light on the allocation of 24% of all teachers of Other Disabilities to work exclusively with Pre-K students. Additionally, 32% of all Speech & Language Pathologists are spending at least some of their time with Pre-K children.

Discipline

During the 2000-01 school year, a total of 947 disciplinary offense records resulted in the suspension/expulsion of 531 Pre-K and kindergarten children across Connecticut [preliminary data]. Of these 947 offenses, 19% were reported to be committed by children with disabilities.

Of the 531 children suspended, only 82 (15.4%) were students with disabilities. Children who committed only one offense made up 62% of all suspended Pre-K and K children. Furthermore, 87.8% of these children were suspended for fewer than 10 total days. Four children each committed more than 10 offenses. One of those children was receiving special education and related services.



*The most common ‘Other’ Offenses include class disruption, disobedience, insubordination and obscenity.