

Profile of Children and Youth Enrolled in Special Education

Definition

Children and youth enrolled in special education is the number of students age 3 through 21 who are enrolled in special education in Nevada's elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

Note: Information on children and youth in special education is collected by the Nevada Department of Education Child Count conducted every December. The count is done to determine age, disability category, and ethnicity for children eligible to receive special education.

Significance of Indicator

Special education is instruction tailored specifically for individual children, depending on their disabilities. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as reauthorized in 1997, state and local school districts are charged with providing specialized educational programs to students with special needs; and, students and parents are given a vehicle for enforcement of their rights.

Although the existence of learning disabilities is indisputable, the process of identifying students with these disabilities can be complicated, as "definitions of a particular disorder may be vague, broad, and with varying presenting manifestations."¹ Children with special needs not only vary by type of disability, but by other differences found in the student population at large--age, family income, race, ethnicity, and temperament.²

Children with disabilities gain academically and socially when they attend classes with all students, rather than being segregated into classes solely for special education. Furthermore, the academic performance of children who are fortunate enough to be without disabilities is not compromised when children with disabilities attend the same classes, according to the growing body of available research.³

Special Education in Nevada

The Nevada State Board of Education has established that all children with disabilities have the right to a free, appropriate public education. This policy includes all children with disabilities ages 3-21. Disabilities range from impaired hearing, vision, and speech to emotional disturbances and mental retardation. Not all children with disabilities require special education--only those with disabilities that interfere with their ability to learn.

Many children with disabilities are in regular classrooms and receive special education in those classrooms or spend a part of their day in regular classes and a part in separate special education classes. Advocates believe educating children with disabilities alongside other children will be an important step in helping them overcome social barriers to getting jobs and to being included into the broader society as they grow older. In recent years, the Nevada Department of Education has tried to encourage placement of children with disabilities in regular classrooms, by devoting resources for professional development and instructional support. National comparative data regarding special education placement settings are not available for the last three school years. However, the Nevada data show there has been movement from "separate class" settings (where students spend 0-39 percent of their school days with nondisabled peers) to "resource" and "regular" class settings (where students spend between 40-100 percent of their school days with nondisabled peers). Of most significance is the growth of students served in "regular" classes with nondisabled peers (for 80 percent or more of their school days) from 43 percent in 1995-1996, to 46 percent in 1998-1999.

Profile of Children and Youth Enrolled in Special Education Continued

Comparison of Nevada and U.S. Placement Data*

School Year	Regular Class		Resource Room		Separate Class		Separate/Residential/ Home/Hospital	
	NV	US	NV	US	NV	US	NV	US
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1995-1996	43	46	37	27	17	23	3	5
1996-1997	44	N.A.*	37	N.A.*	16	N.A.*	3	N.A.*
1997-1998	42	N.A.*	38	N.A.*	16	N.A.*	3	N.A.*
1998-1999	46	N.A.*	33	N.A.*	16	N.A.*	3	N.A.*

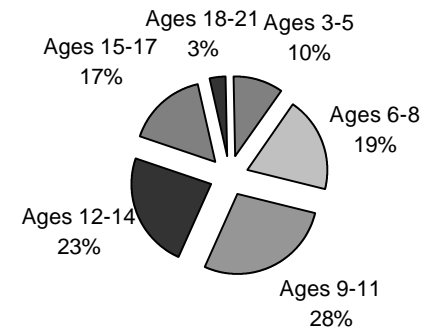
Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest tenth.

* N.A. = Not Available.

Source: Nevada Department of Education, Educational Equity Team.

- ❖ On December 1, 1999, there were 35,714 children enrolled in special education in Nevada (11 percent of the student population). Chapter 388 of the Nevada Administrative Code defines the 13 primary disability categories for special education purposes (see <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NAC/NAC-388.html>).
- ❖ The two largest counties in the state have the most children with disabilities, 22,568 in Clark and 6,072 in Washoe in 1999.
- ❖ The most frequent disability among Nevada's students is "learning disability" (57 percent of children in special education).
- ❖ One-half of the students in special education were 9-14 years of age in 1999.
- ❖ Slightly over one-half of the students ages 17-19 exiting special education received a standard education diploma (22 percent) or an adjusted diploma or certificate (30 percent) during the 1999-2000 school year.

Children and Youth Enrolled in Special Education in Nevada by Age: 1999



Source: Nevada Department of Education, Educational Equity Team.

Numbers and Percentages of Special Education Students Ages 17, 18, and 19 Exiting Special Education: 1999-2000 School Year

Special Education Students	Number	Percent
Received regular education diploma	422	22
Received adjusted diploma or certificate	564	30
Returned to regular education (no longer eligible)	51	3
Moved (known to be continuing education)	327	17
Moved (not known to be continuing education)	137	7
Dropped out of school	382	20
Died	5	>1
TOTAL	1,888	

Source: Nevada Department of Education, Educational Equity Team.

Children and Youth Enrolled in Special Education Continued

Children and Youth in Special Education by Primary Disability: School Year 1999-2000 (Ages 3-21)

School District	Total # of Students	Mentally Handicapped	Aurally Handicapped	Speech/Language Handicapped	Visually Handicapped	Emotion-ally Disabled	Ortho-pedically Impaired	Health Impaired	Learning Disabled	Deaf/Blind	Multiple Handicapped	Autism	Traumatic Brain Injured	Develop-mentally Delayed* applies to 3-5 year olds only	Total Students with Disabilities	% Students in Special Ed
Carson City	8,365	36	22	251	5	47	6	25	704	0	21	7	1	39	1,164	14
Churchill	4,860	21	10	108	0	39	11	17	401	0	3	3	5	78	696	14
Clark	217,526	1,139	294	4,073	92	1,138	186	723	12,677	5	475	207	75	1,484	22,568	10
Douglas	7,158	34	6	197	3	16	4	15	461	0	17	12	0	56	821	11
Elko	10,161	63	10	264	3	10	5	13	629	0	13	5	2	33	1,050	10
Esmerelda	105	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	1	13	12
Eureka	347	0	0	13	1	0	1	4	51	0	0	0	1	5	76	22
Humboldt	4,034	19	4	71	0	9	7	2	359	0	1	3	2	37	514	13
Lander	1,534	6	2	32	0	0	2	5	113	0	2	1	0	28	191	12
Lincoln	1,017	6	0	3	0	2	2	0	46	0	0	2	0	9	70	7
Lyon	6,539	29	15	171	4	27	14	46	488	0	28	6	7	88	923	14
Mineral	907	6	0	30	1	1	1	4	86	0	1	2	1	16	149	16
Nye	5,444	31	1	92	6	63	8	33	553	0	18	4	0	43	852	16
Pershing	963	8	0	10	1	2	3	5	126	2	2	1	0	25	185	19
Storey	458	3	1	11	0	2	1	1	69	0	0	1	0	3	92	20
Washoe	64,508	347	75	844	19	282	63	375	3,449	0	100	72	23	423	6,072	9
White Pine	1,684	8	1	56	0	2	3	2	158	0	4	1	1	11	247	15
Nevada Youth Training Center	176	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	20	11
Caliente Youth Center	95	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	11	12
Summit View Center	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NEVADA	335,961	1,760	441	6,231	135	1,642	317	1,271	20,391	7	685	327	119	2,378	35,714	11
Nevada % by Disabling Condition		4.9	1.2	17.4	0.4	4.6	0.9	3.5	57.1	0	1.9	0.9	0.3	6.6		

Source: Nevada Department of Education, Educational Equity Team.