

Data Bulletin:

Connecticut's 3- to 5-Year Old Students with Disabilities

Bureau of Student Assessment and Research

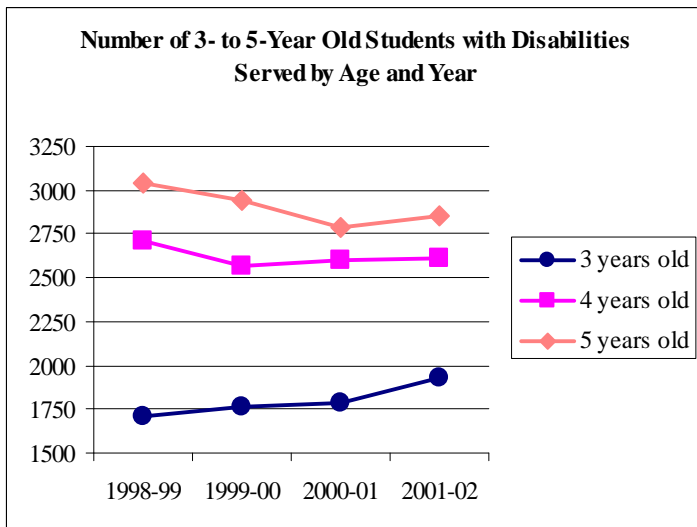
June 2002

Special Education and related services are mandated for 3-, 4-, and 5-year old children with disabilities by federal and state law to ensure provision of free appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible preschool-age children in accordance with their individual needs. In Connecticut, special education is provided for eligible children through the state's local and regional school districts.

Children, ages three through five years, may be eligible for special education services, provided they meet the eligibility criteria for special education. Connecticut regulations further define the eligibility for 3-, 4-, and 5-year old children as those children, "who have attained the age of three and whose degree and type of exceptionality, based upon evaluation by a planning and placement team, is such that the absence of special education will impair the child's educational development to the extent that it is unlikely that the child will be able to make satisfactory progress when the child attains school age."

How many Connecticut 3- to 5-year old children receive special education services?

A total of 7,390 three-to five-year olds received special education services in the 2001-02 school year. The prevalence rate for 3- to 5-year old students with disabilities in Connecticut was 5.3% in 2001-02, up from 5.14% the previous year. The graph below shows an end to the 3 year decline of identified 5-year olds. National data places Connecticut slightly above the U.S. average prevalence of 5.05% (1999-00), although an 8-year national trend also indicates an increase in the number of 3-, 4-, & 5-year old students served in special education.



Less than half of the Pre-K students who attend Connecticut preschool programs are special education. The others are children attending districts that provide early childhood programs for non-special education students. Large, inner city schools tend to provide more of such services. A comparison of pre-K students by ERG provides some insight as to which ERGs have more preschool services.

	3-5 Count	CT 3-5 Prevalence	US 3-5 Prevalence	CT 6-21 Prevalence	US 6-21 Prevalence
2001-02	7390	5.30%	not avail.	9.06%	not avail.
2000-01	7172	5.14%	not avail.	9.08%	not avail.
1999-00	7275	5.40%	5.05%	9.41%	8.92%
1998-99	7461	5.71%	4.90%	10.06%	8.82%
1997-98	7458	5.56%	4.79%	10.22%	8.75%

Special education prevalence for students ages 6-21 has been declining the past several years. One might expect that as the 3- to 5-year old student prevalence increases, Connecticut will see a rise in the K-12 Special Education prevalence statewide over the next couple of years.

ERG	Pre-K Students with Disabilities	All CT Pre-K Students	% of CT Pre-K Students with Disabilities
A *	339	338	100.3%
B	750	924	81.2%
C	434	654	66.4%
D	659	834	79.0%
E	193	485	39.8%
F	661	1279	51.7%
G	197	726	27.1%
H	877	1903	46.1%
I	941	3331	28.2%
Total	5051	11041	45.7%

*Note: The number of students with disabilities is higher than the all student count because some students with disabilities receive services outside the school setting and are not included in the all student district enrollment numbers.

Who are these 3-, 4- & 5-year old students?

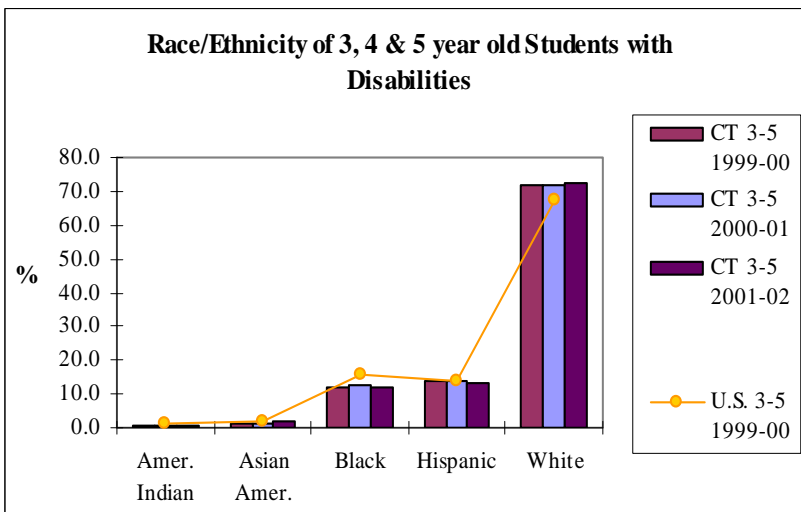
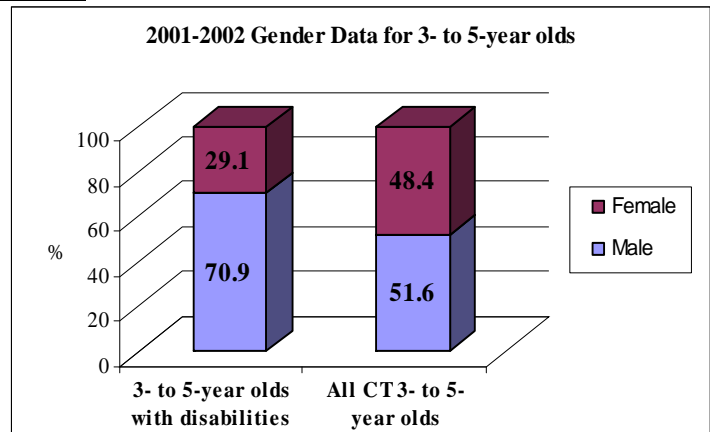
Disability: All 3- to 5-year olds	1998	1999	2000	2001	2001%
Learning Disabled	145	116	113	54	0.7%
Intellectually Disabled	51	31	50	48	0.6%
Emotional Disturbance	24	20	30	21	0.3%
Speech Impaired	2485	2507	2583	2698	36.5%
Visually Impaired	36	31	36	41	0.6%
Orthopedic Impairment	32	33	30	40	0.5%
Deaf-Blindness	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	4259	4077	3847	3980	53.9%
ADD/ADHD	na	15	8	12	0.2%
Neurologically Impaired	na	20	33	37	0.5%
Total	7443	7275	7172	7390	100.0%

The Disability table to the left shows counts of 3- to 5-year old students with disabilities served over the last 4 years. Developmentally Delayed and Speech Impaired constitute over 90% of all 3- to 5-year olds served.

A Developmentally Delayed student experiences delays in one or more of the following developmental areas: physical, cognitive, communication, adaptive or social/emotional. The Developmentally Delayed category is a disability that is limited to age 5 in CT. Prior to a child's sixth birthday, he or she must be recategorized into another disability group or exited from special education. This reevaluation at age 6 is where we begin to see an increase in the number of Learning Disabled students.

The Gender ratio for students with disabilities (below) is skewed toward higher identification of males. This is true for both the 3-5 and the 6-21 age groups.

For the most part, the prevalence of each disability type for 3- to 5-year olds has remained steady over the last 4 years. The number of identified 3-, 4- & 5-year old autistic children has increased by 50% since 1998. Experts believe this increase is due to three factors: (1) better training in the identification of autism, (2) increased parental awareness of the disability and its symptoms, as well as (3) an improved ability to recognize and identify milder forms of autism.



The data regarding the race/ethnicity of 3- to 5-year olds served through special education presents a fairly consistent picture across 3 years of data.

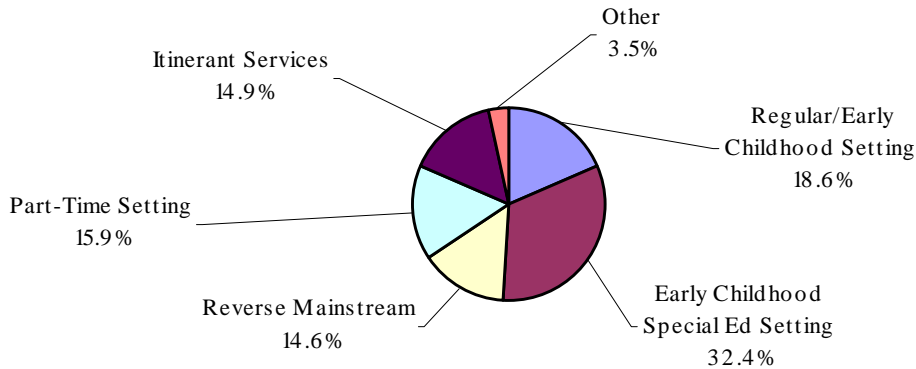
An interesting trend in the race/ethnicity data includes the over-identification of white students with respect to both Connecticut and the U.S. populations of 3-, 4- & 5-year olds.

It seems that Asian 3- to 5-year olds are identified at one half their prevalence rate within to the state population and the number of black students receiving services continues to be 1 ½ percentage points less than their prevalence in the state.

Compared to the prevalence rates of 3- to 5-year olds with disabilities across the U.S., Connecticut is identifying white students at a rate nearly 5% higher.

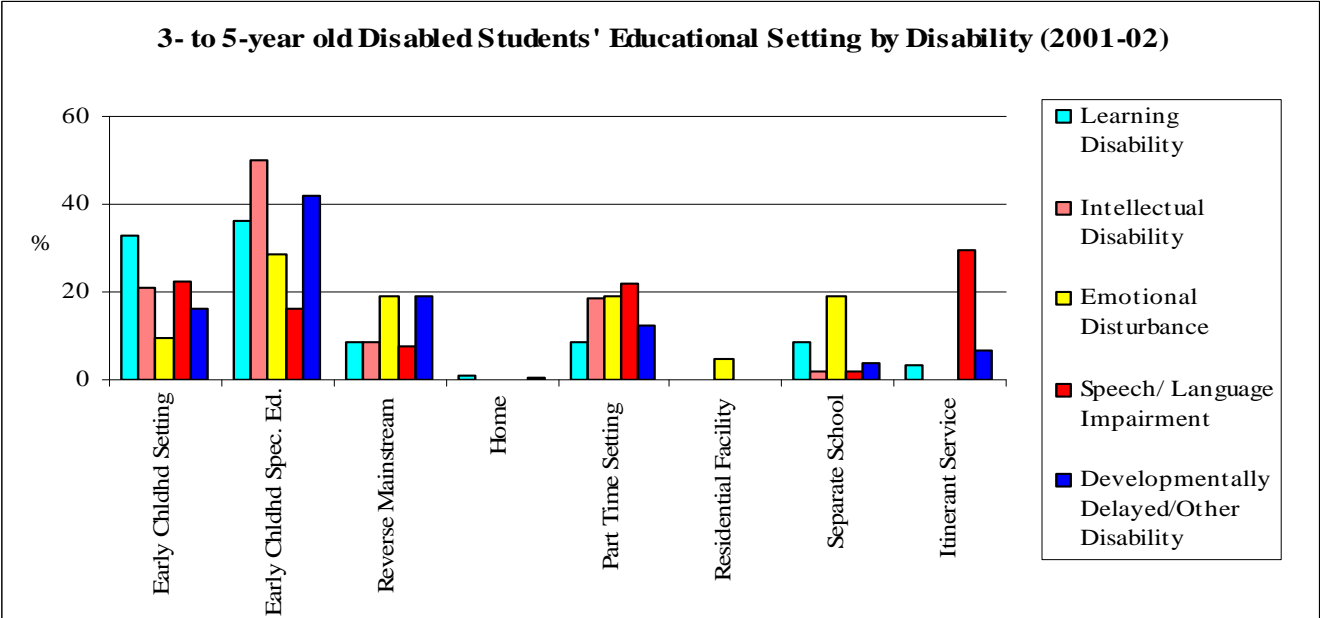
In what kinds of settings do 3- to 5-year old students with disabilities receive services?

2001-02 Setting of Services for 3- to 5-Year Old Students with Disabilities



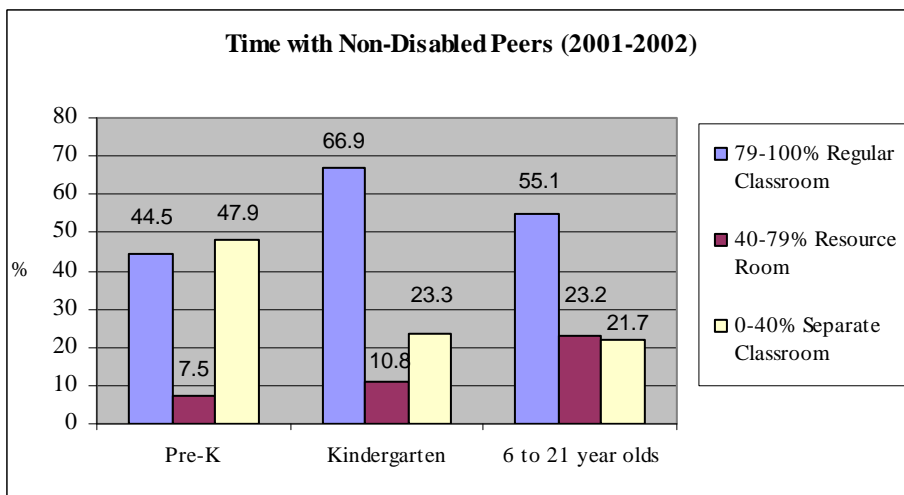
Just over half of Connecticut’s 3-, 4- & 5-year old special needs students receive services in Regular/Early Childhood and Special Education Early Childhood settings. Itinerant services are special education services provided in any setting except home for no more than 3 hours per week.

In general, there does not appear to be a relationship between a student’s disability type and their education location. As noted earlier, 90% of 3- to 5-year olds with disabilities are speech/language impaired or developmentally delayed (part of the ‘other disability’ category below). These students can be seen across six of the eight educational settings. While Emotionally Disturbed (ED) students appear to be selectively placed in residential facilities, these placements represent less than 5% of all 3- to 5-year old ED students. Increasing the proportion of students placed into the Regular/Early Childhood setting is a primary objective of the Bureau of Early Childhood Education for the next several years.



What kinds of trends do we see in the amount of time disabled students are spending with their non-disabled peers?

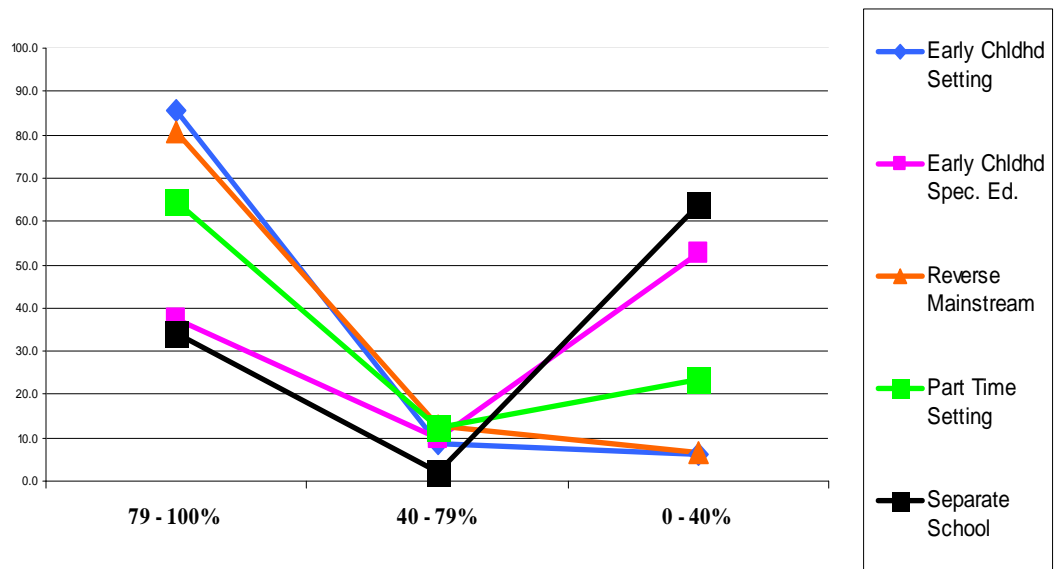
One encouraging trend is an increase in the number of students who receive their services in the regular/early childhood classroom, (spending 79-100% of their time with their non-disabled peers). In the 1999-2000 school year only 45.4% of 3- to 5-year olds spent this amount of time with non-disabled peers, but in 2001-2002 this number increased to 51.6 % for all 3- to 5-year olds. In fact, Regular/Early Childhood programs have increased the percent of their students receiving services in the regular classroom from 64.9% to 85.4% over the last three years. This indicates that disabled students are spending more time with their non-disabled peers than in previous years.



Trends for all 3- to 5-year olds take on a different picture when separated by grade. The table to the left shows Kindergarten students spending more time with non-disabled peers than their disabled peers in upper grades. Additional focus is now being given to the Pre-K population and options for increasing their opportunities for inclusion with non-disabled peers.

Another view of the time with non-disabled peers picture demonstrates the division between placements in regular (79-100%) and separate (0-40%) classrooms. The graph to the right depicts an 'all or nothing' scenario when it comes to spending time with non-disabled peers. Efforts are currently underway to expand the opportunities for children ages 3, 4 & 5 to spend more time with their peers.

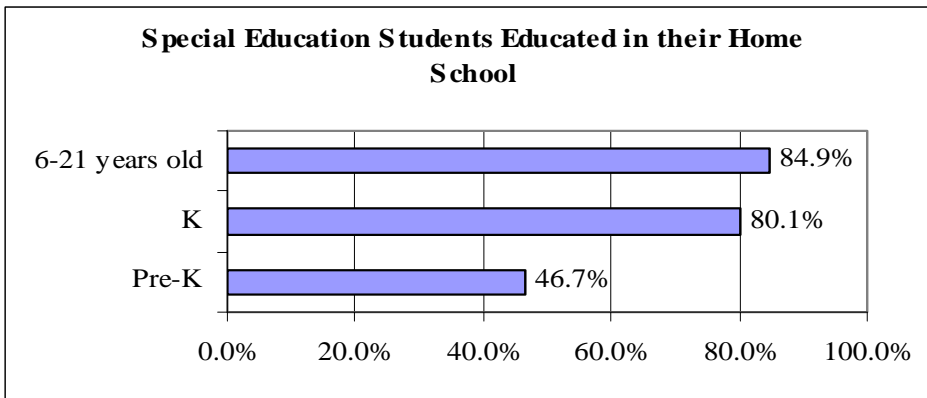
Service Setting for 3- to 5-year olds by Time Spent with Non-Disabled Peers (2001-02)



Although a placement discrepancy still exists when considering the amount of time students spend with their non-disabled peers, state-wide data show a 3-year trend toward increased inclusion with non-disabled peers (increase in the percent of students in the 79-100% grouping). This trend is evident across all 5 major disability groups.

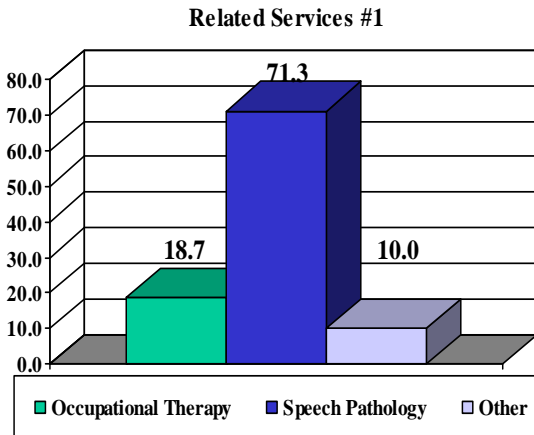
Where are these students educated and what kinds of services do they receive?

One of the new data points collected regarding student placement asks whether students are attending the school they would otherwise attend if they were not disabled. If they do not, this information allows us to identify where they actually go to school as well as where they should go. Pre-school special needs students are less frequently educated in their home school, which supports earlier trends regarding placement in educational settings away from non-disabled peers. One difficulty with this issue is the fact that district pre-school programs do not exist in every elementary school, and where they do exist, they generally serve equal numbers of disabled and non-disabled students. This reduces the time spent with non-disabled peers and increases the possibility of receiving education services in a building other than the home school.

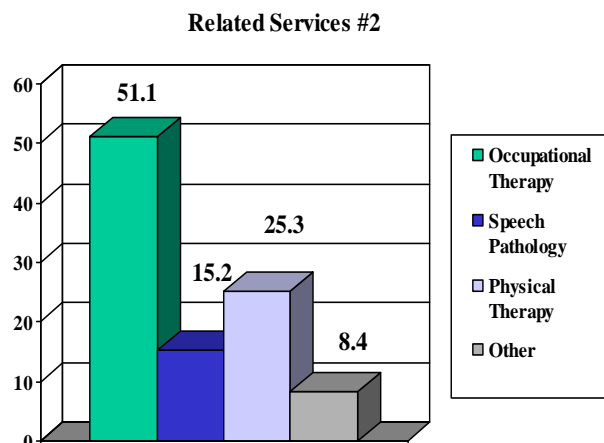


While students are not attending their home school as often as we would like, over 90% of all 3-, 4- & 5-year old special needs students are educated within their local district. This trend has been evident for the past 4 years.

Special needs students receive related services in addition to the primary service for their specific disability. Districts can report up to 2 additional related services that are provided to each student. On the right are graphs of the most common types of services provided to 3- to 5-year old students with disabilities. Speech and Occupational therapy are the most common types of services provided to students as support services for their identified disability. 'Other' services include transportation, counseling, interpreters, social workers and psychiatric services.



Of the 7,390 3- to 5-year old students with disabilities, 3,662 (50%) received an additional related service to support the primary services they were already receiving. Only 1,781 (24%) were reported as having received a second related service.



Interpreter services were provided for 5 students in the 2001-02 school year and Social worker services were used with 57 students.

Other interesting trends for 3- to 5-year olds.

2001-02 Statewide 3- to 5-year old Special Education Costs by Disability*

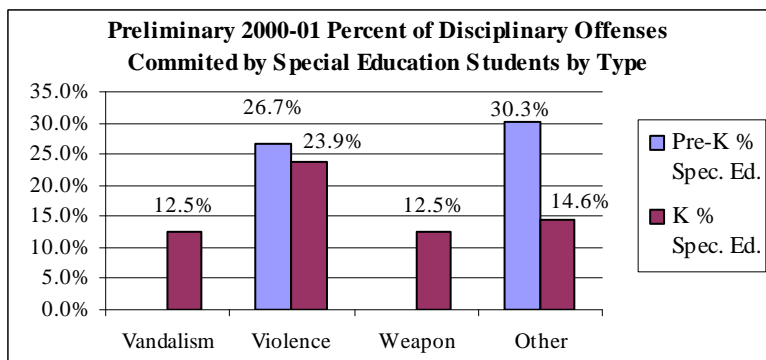
* estimated cost figures					
	Mean	Median	Maximum	Students	Total Costs
Developmentally Delayed	\$30,873.64	\$26,078.00	\$136,317	N=161	\$4,970,656
Autism	\$54,481.04	\$52,340.00	\$132,614	N=53	\$2,887,495
Hearing Impaired	\$32,821.06	\$34,979.50	\$78,849	N=32	\$1,050,274
Multiple Disabilities	\$40,263.93	\$40,784.00	\$118,700	N=15	\$603,959
Neurologically Impaired	\$58,739.86	\$40,783.00	\$117,205	N=7	\$411,179
Speech Impaired	\$4,611.76	\$2,200.00	\$41,497	N=37	\$170,635
Other Health Impaired	\$38,156.50	\$38,717.50	\$74,041	N=4	\$152,626
Emotional Disturbance	\$30,265.80	\$29,249.00	\$41,670	N=5	\$151,329
Traumatic Brain Injury	\$76,590.00	\$76,590.00	\$76,590	N=1	\$76,590
Visually Impaired	\$71,030.00	\$71,030.00	\$71,030	N=1	\$71,030
Orthopedic Impairment	\$15,411.33	\$1,500.00	\$43,564	N=3	\$46,234
Intellectually Disabled	\$20,143.50	\$20,143.50	\$36,987	N=2	\$40,287
Learning Disabled	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000	N=1	\$10,000

Costs

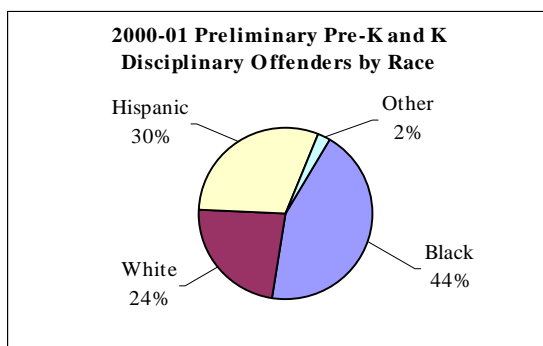
Estimated costs for educating special needs students, over and above the district's average per pupil expenditures, are reported every year. The cost table to the left summarizes estimated expenditures incurred by the state for educating special education 3-, 4- & 5-year olds. Counts of the number of students for whom additional costs were paid are included. Monies paid to educate these students include tuition and transportation fees to outside providers.

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 students across Connecticut [preliminary data]. Of these 947 offenses, 19% were reported to be committed by Special Needs students, while only 15.4% of the 531 students suspended were students with disabilities. Children who committed only one offense made up 62% of all suspended Pre-K and K children. One of the four students who committed more than 10 offenses each, was a special education student.



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



Of the 82 special education students suspended in Pre-K and Kindergarten, 50% were suspended for only 1 or 2 days during the school year. Furthermore, 87.8% of these special needs students were suspended for fewer than 10 total days. However, two special education students were suspended for significantly longer periods of time, 25 and 43 days each. The student who was suspended for a total of 43 days missed 23.9% of the school year (assuming a 180 day calendar).

Staff

Of the 7,390 special needs 3-, 4- & 5-year olds, 5,309 work with speech & language pathologists due to their primary disability or to receive related services. Additionally, 53.9% of 3- to 5-year olds are identified as developmentally delayed and receive their primary services from instructional staff certified in Other Disabilities. This sheds light on the allocation of 24% of all Other Disability teachers 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.

	Total State Count	% Serving some Time with Pre-K	% Serving All Time with Pre-K
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>	3717	14.9%	1.9%
Specific Learning Disabled	3237	5.1%	2.8%
Intellectual Disability	570	7.7%	6.3%
Other Disability	469	30.7%	24.7%
<i>All Special Ed. Instructional Staff</i>	5017	7.7%	5.1%