

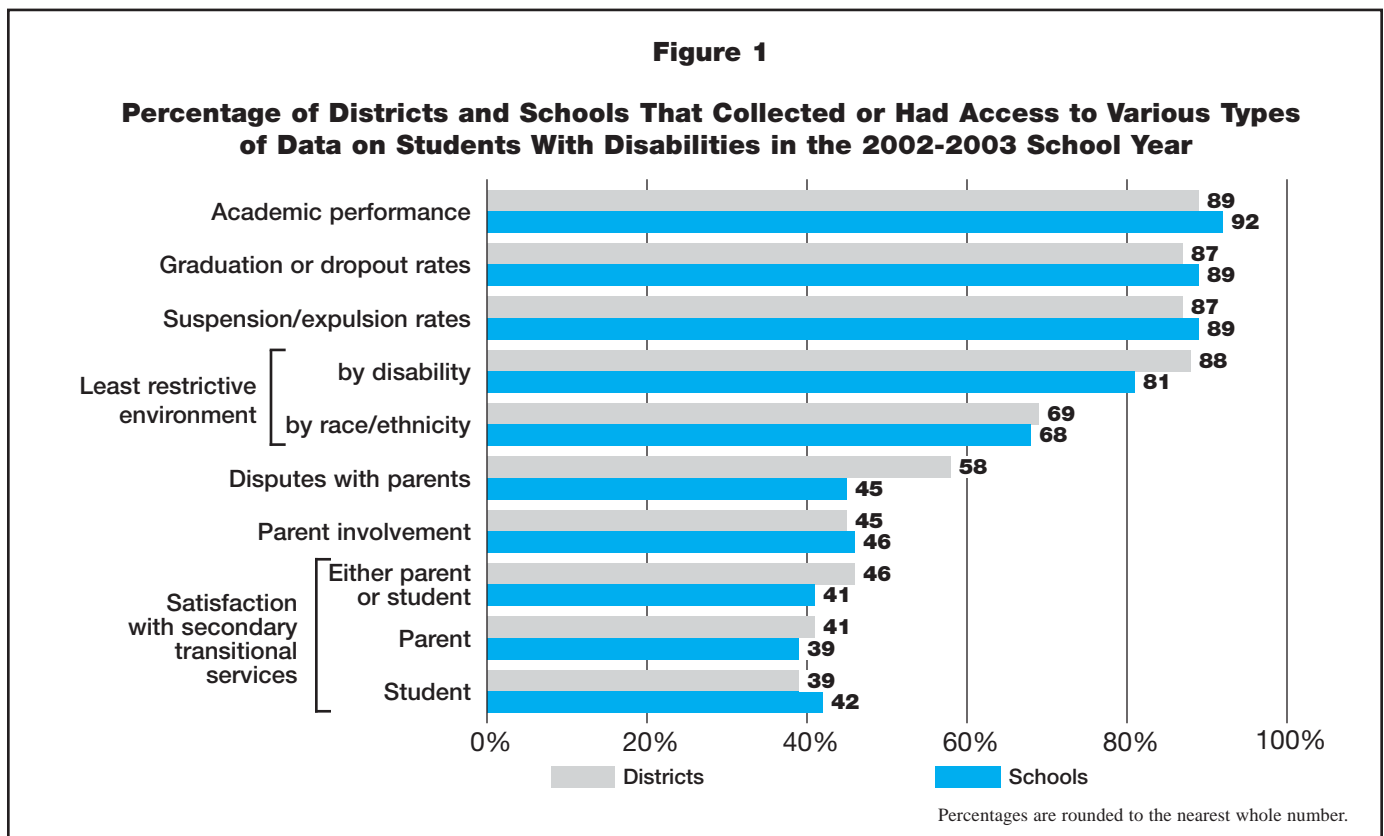
# What data do districts and schools collect or have access to and how do they use them?

The data that schools and districts collect or have access to can be used to make decisions for improving services for students with disabilities. By collecting data, districts and schools can better understand the effects of their current practices and address areas that need improvement. Below we report on the various types of data that were available to districts and schools and the way they used the data in the 2002-2003 school year.

**Although many schools and districts have information about graduation or dropout rates, they lack access to other critical information about students with disabilities.** (See Figure 1)

For instance, our study found that:

- A large majority of districts (89 percent) and schools (92 percent) have access to data on the academic performance of students with IEPs.



The results summarized in this fact sheet are based on the longitudinal *Study of State and Local Implementation and Impact of IDEA* supported by the Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, as part of Contract ED-00-C0-0026, conducted by Abt Associates Inc. Any points of view expressed in this fact sheet are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education.

Surveys were mailed to key personnel responsible for or familiar with special education issues in all 50 states and the District of Columbia - a total of 959 districts and 4,434 schools. For state, district, and school surveys, response rates were 100 percent, 87 percent, and 74 percent, respectively. Mostly, respondents completed the surveys for the 2002-2003 school year. Final data collection has been completed (2004-2005 school year), and analysis and reporting of these data will occur in March 2006.

From Abt Associates Inc. (2005, March). *Final 2nd Interim Report (2002-2003 School Year), The Study of State and Local Implementation and Impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Study reports and data tables are available at <http://abt.sliidea.org>.

- Despite the persistent concern that fewer resources are targeted at providing minority students with the least restrictive environment, only 69 percent of districts and 68 percent of schools had information on the least restrictive environment by race and/or ethnicity, though many districts (88 percent) and schools (81 percent) had that same data by disability.
- Proportionally, slightly more districts (58 percent) than schools (45 percent) had information on disputes between parents of students with disabilities and schools.
- Fewer than half of districts and schools (45 percent and 46 percent, respectively) had access to information about the level of involvement of parents/guardians of students with IEPs.

**When districts and schools had access to data, they were more likely to use it as a program evaluation tool than for planning for professional development.** (See Figure 2)

For instance, our study found that:

- Eighty-three percent of districts and 88 percent of schools used data on academic performance for program evaluation. A smaller portion of districts (53 percent) and schools (49 percent) used it for planning professional development.
- Data on graduation or dropout rates were used by the large majority of districts (85 percent) and schools (86 percent) for program evaluation. Less than one-third of schools used this data for either purpose.

