

How do states and districts report test scores and dropout rates of students with disabilities?

Since the early 1990s, reform initiatives have focused on implementing accountability systems designed to capture the performance of students, including their achievements and their graduation and dropout rates. In 1997, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) emphasized including students with disabilities in assessments, reporting on their participation, as well as setting goals for reducing their dropout rates.

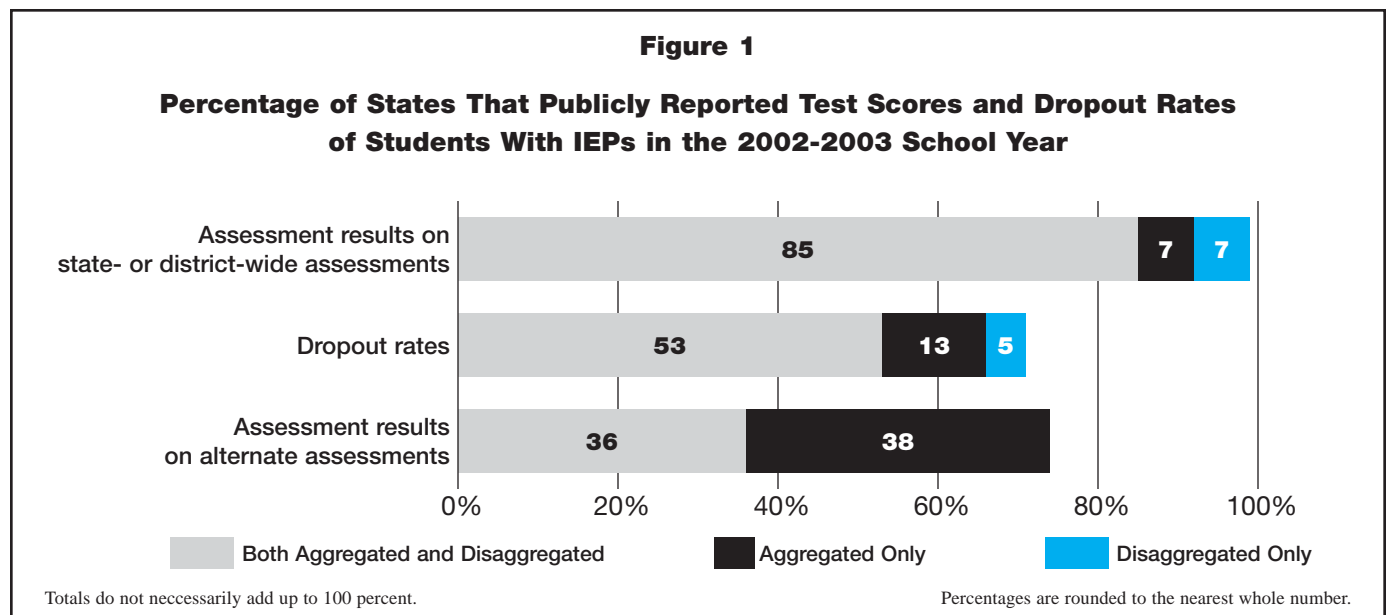
States and districts can choose from a number of policy tools to meet these federal goals, including how they report on the performance of students with disabilities. Below we discuss the percentage of states and districts publicly reporting test scores and dropout rates for students with disabilities and on whether the reported data is aggregated or disaggregated from the performance of other students, or shown both ways. When states and districts report aggregated data, students with disabilities are viewed as equal members of the student population as evidenced by their participation in the accountability system. States and districts that report disaggregated data provide the public with performance data on a specific sub-population of students,

thereby focusing attention on improving educational outcomes for these students.

Virtually all states reported on test scores of students with disabilities (99 percent), although the practices for reporting varied. Fewer states reported on dropout rates and alternate assessments results (71 and 74 percent, respectively). (See Figure 1)

For instance, our study found that:

- Many states disaggregated their test scores to distinguish results for students with disabilities from their peers. Eighty-five percent of states reported both aggregated and disaggregated scores, while 7 percent of states reported only disaggregated scores.
- Fifty-eight percent of states reported disaggregated data on the dropout rates of students with disabilities, while 66 percent reported aggregated data.



- Thirty-six percent of states reported both aggregated and disaggregated data, while 38 percent reported only aggregated data, on the performance of students with disabilities taking an alternate assessment.

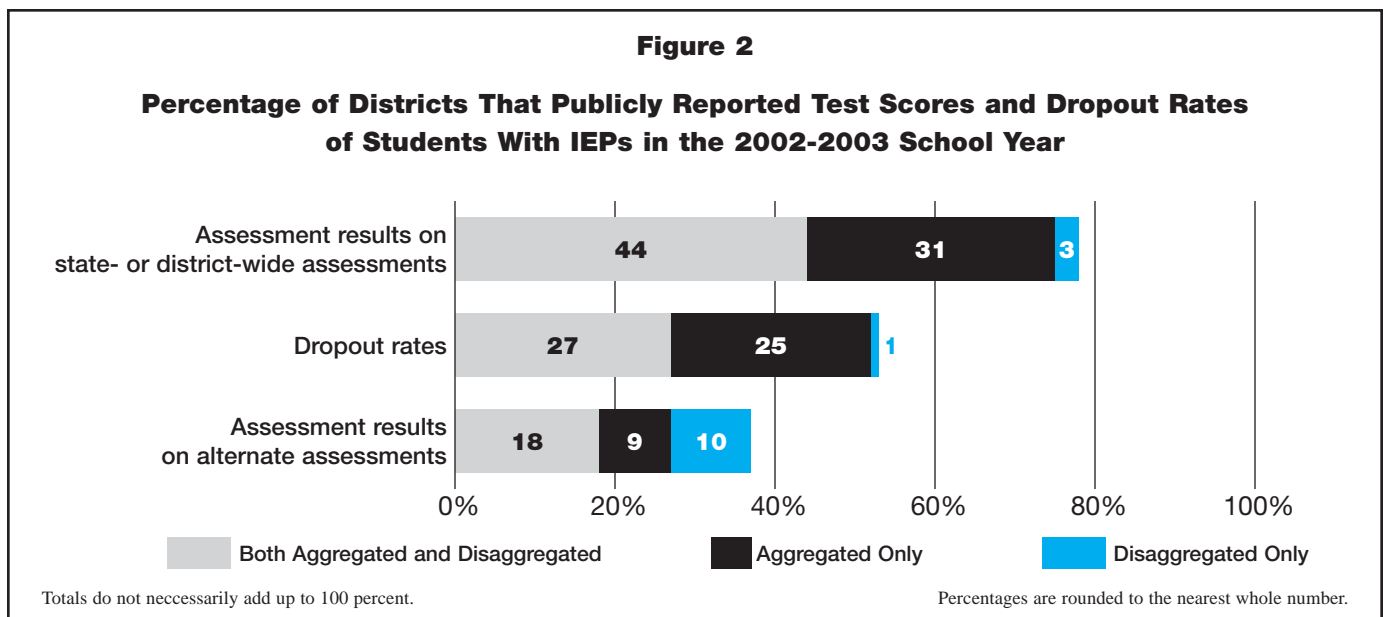
Proportionally, more districts publicly reported the test scores of students with disabilities (78 percent) than those reporting dropout rates (53 percent). A total of about one-third of districts (37 percent) publicly reported assessment results for students taking an alternate assessment. (See Figure 2)

For instance, our study found that:

- A total of three-fourths of districts (75 percent) reported aggregated assessment results of students with disabilities on state- or district-wide assessments, whereas a total of only 47 percent reported disaggregated data.

- More districts reported aggregated dropout rates of students with disabilities than disaggregated results (52 percent and 28 percent, respectively).
- Few districts reported aggregated or disaggregated results of students taking an alternate assessment (27 percent and 28 percent, respectively).

In sum, more states than districts publicly reported the test scores on state- or district-wide assessments, performance on alternate assessments, and dropout rates of students with disabilities. In general, states reported both aggregated and disaggregated data on students with disabilities, whereas, proportionally, districts were more likely to report aggregated data. These findings suggest that states view students with disabilities as equal members of the system and seek data to improve their educational performance. Districts tend to focus most of their attention on including students with disabilities as equal members of the accountability system.



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-CO-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>.