

# How well prepared are teachers to educate students with disabilities?

When asked about access to general education for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), schools report that a majority of students with IEPs (54 percent) spend at least 80 percent of their day in general education classes. As students with disabilities spend more time in general education environments, it is important that general education teachers as well as special education teachers be well prepared to educate students with disabilities. Below we report on how schools reported on the preparedness of general and special education teachers to educate students with disabilities in the 2002-2003 school year.

**A majority of schools reported that most of their special education teachers were well prepared to improve the academic performance of students with disabilities and to develop and implement IEPs, among other things, but fewer reported that special education teachers were prepared in dropout prevention or recovery strategies.** (See Figure 1)

For instance, our study found that:

- A majority of schools (91 percent) reported that most of their special education teachers were well prepared to develop and implement IEPs.
- More than four in five schools (84 percent) reported that their special education teachers were well prepared to improve the academic performance of students with IEPs. The same proportion reported that their special education teachers were well prepared to use accommodations in instruction and assessment.
- Almost three-fourths (71 percent) of schools reported that most of their special education teachers were well prepared to increase the access of students with IEPs to the general curriculum.
- More than half of schools reported that their special education teachers were well prepared to use alternative assessments (58 percent) or to increase the participation of parents or guardians of students with IEPs in the classroom (51 percent).
- A small percentage of schools (36 percent) reported that their special education teachers were well prepared in dropout prevention and recovery strategies.

**Few schools reported that general education teachers were well prepared to educate students with disabilities.** (See Figure 2)

For instance, our study found that:

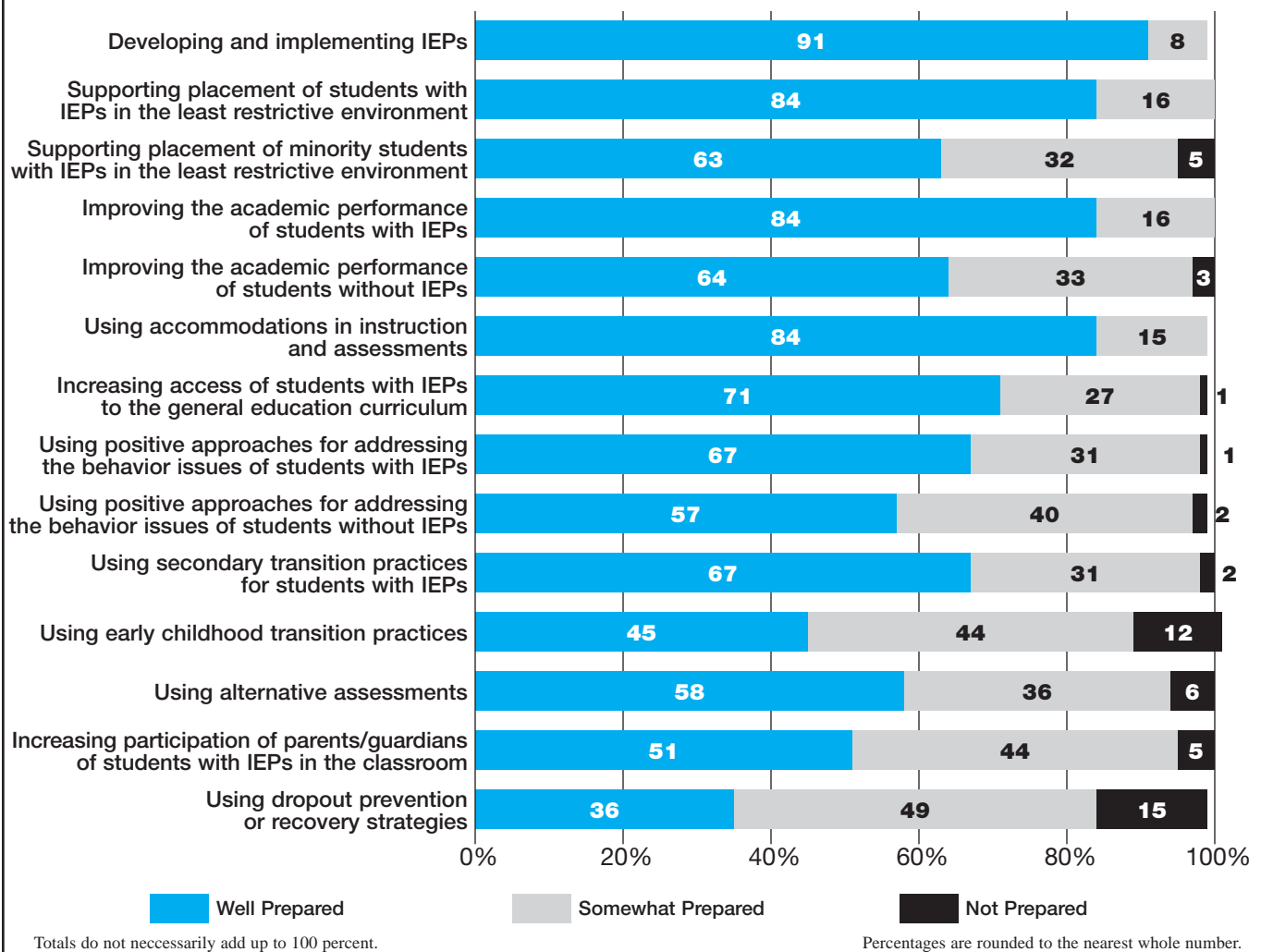
- Less than one-third of schools (30 percent) reported that most of their general education teachers were well prepared to develop and implement IEPs.
- Three-quarters (75 percent) of schools reported that most general education teachers were well prepared to improve the academic performance of students without IEPs, but fewer (41 percent) reported teachers prepared to improve the academic performance of students with IEPs.
- Less than half of schools (46 percent) reported that most of their general education teachers were well prepared to use accommodations in their instruction. Similarly, a modest proportion of schools (39 percent) reported general education teachers well prepared to increase access of students with IEPs to the general education curriculum.

- While just over half of schools (52 percent) reported that general education teachers were well prepared to use positive approaches to the behavior issues of students without IEPs, an even smaller percentage (37 percent) were well prepared to use positive approaches to the behavior issues of students with IEPs.
- Less than one-third (28 percent) of schools reported that most of their general education teachers were well prepared to increase the participation of parents or guardians of students with IEPs in the classroom of their children.

In sum, schools reported that most of their special education teachers were better prepared than their general education teachers to educate students with disabilities in every area surveyed. Schools reported that special education teachers were well prepared to develop and implement IEPs, improve the academic performance of students with IEPs, and use accommodations in instruction and assessments. However, general education teachers were slightly better prepared to educate students without IEPs. According to schools, large numbers of both special and general education teachers were not well prepared to use dropout prevention or recovery strategies, or early childhood transition practices, or to increase participation of parents or guardians of students with IEPs.

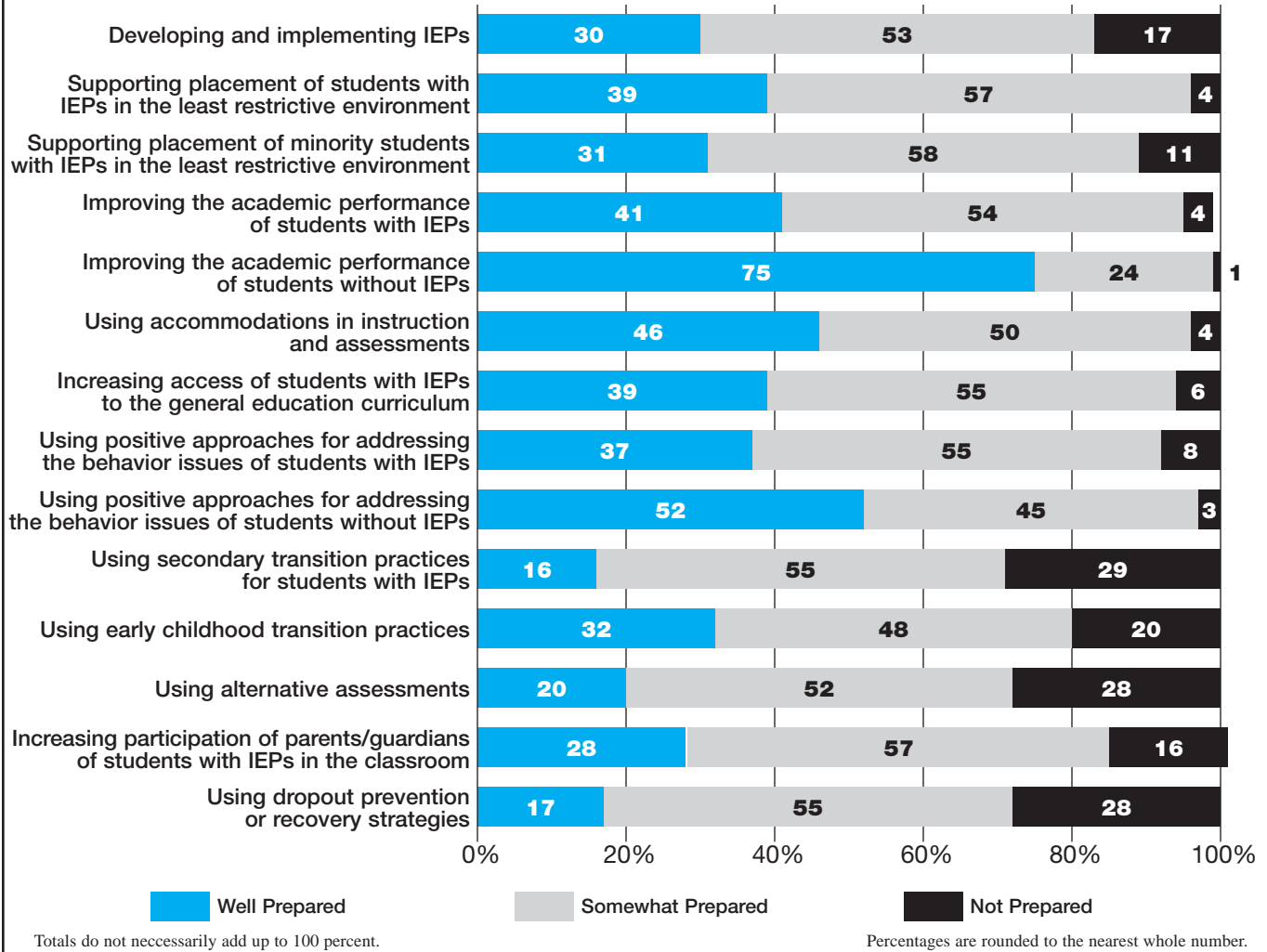
**Figure 1**

**Percentage of Schools That Reported Preparedness of Most Special Education Teachers**



**Figure 2**

**Percentage of Schools That Reported Preparedness of Most General Education Teachers**



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>.