



## Disability Awareness: Students Served Under IDEA over Time

Est. Time: 30-45 Minutes

### Learning Objective

1) To understand that the number of identified students vary by disability, 2) to describe the different prevalence rates of students with disabilities assigned to various special education categories, and 3) to identify the factors that influence changes in prevalence rates.

### Overview

Though the percentage of students with disabilities as part of the overall student population has fluctuated somewhat, it has nevertheless tended to remain within the 10–11% range. As the overall numbers of students with disabilities has increased, so, too, has the number of students in America. IDEA '04 enumerates thirteen special education categories (plus “developmental delay, for which data are also collected) through which individualized services and supports can be provided”:

Autism	Deaf-blindness	Deafness
Emotional disturbance	Hearing impairment	Intellectual disability
Multiple disabilities	Orthopedic impairment	Other health impairment
Specific learning disability	Speech or language impairment	Traumatic brain injury
Visual impairment	Developmental delay	

Participation rates in these individual categories have not remained stable. Some categories have shown decreases in the number of students served, while others have shown increases. In this activity, students will examine the changes over time, and also discuss factors that influence those changes.

### Activity

1. Pass out the attached worksheet and instruct your students to calculate the changes in schoolchildren with disabilities served in the ten-year span between the 1995–1996 (Column A) and the 2005–2006 (Column B) school years. The calculation formula is  $(B-A/A) \times 100$ . Students can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups. If time is of concern, instructors can assign a few disability categories to each person/pair/team, and then students share their answers with the rest of the class.



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### Activity [Cont.]

2. Students then calculate the changes in those served during the five-year span between the 2005–2006 (Column B) and the 2010–2011 (Column D) school years. The calculation formula is  $(D-B/B) \times 100$ .

### Questions/Discussion Topics

1. How do changes in disability populations compare to those in the overall student population?
2. Which disability categories have shown the largest increases during the ten-year span between 1995 and 2005?
3. Why do you think these categories experienced such large changes in enrollment?
4. Which of these categories continued to show large increases in enrollment from 2005 to 2010?
5. Which categories have shown decreases in enrollment over the past five years?
6. Why do you think these decreases have occurred?



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**Number of Students Ages 6–21 Served under IDEA during the 1995–1996, 2005–2006, and 2010–2011 School Years**

Disability	Fall 1995 (A)	Fall 2005 (B)	% change over 10 years (C) $(B-A/A) \times 100$	Fall 2010 (D)	% change over 5 years (E) $(D-B/B) \times 100$
Total number of students enrolled U.S. public schools	44,840,000	49,113,000	10%	49,484,000	1%
Total number of students with disabilities	5,070,658	6,021,462		5,818,074	
Specific learning disabilities	2,597,231	2,727,802		2,412,801	
Speech or language impairments	1,025,941	1,143,195		1,089,976	
Intellectual disabilities	585,308	533,426		444,894	
Emotional disturbance	438,217	471,306		387,368	
Multiple disabilities	94,156	132,595		123,417	
Hearing impairments	68,070	71,484		69,685	
Orthopedic impairments	63,200	62,618		55,704	
Other health impairments	133,419	557,121		703,912	
Visual impairments	25,484	25,369		25,632	
Autism	28,827	192,643		369,774	
Traumatic brain injury	1,362	1,539		1,281	
Deaf-blindness	9,443	23,449		24,594	
Developmental delay	----	78,915		109,036	

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS).