



# Issue Brief: Discipline and Students with Disabilities

May 2004

- States with a *higher percentage of students with disabilities in regular class 80% or more of the time* tend to have **lower discipline rates**.
- States with *rewards at the building level* tend to have **higher discipline rates**.
- States with *more unrestricted accommodations* tend to have **lower discipline rates**.

## LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND DISCIPLINE

Table 1 depicts the correlations<sup>1</sup> between the percentage of time that students with disabilities spent outside the regular class and the rate at which students with disabilities are removed from school for disciplinary reasons. (Discipline rates are defined as the unduplicated count of students removed from school by school personnel or hearing officers, students expelled, students on long term suspension and students having multiple short term suspensions which total more than 10 days.)

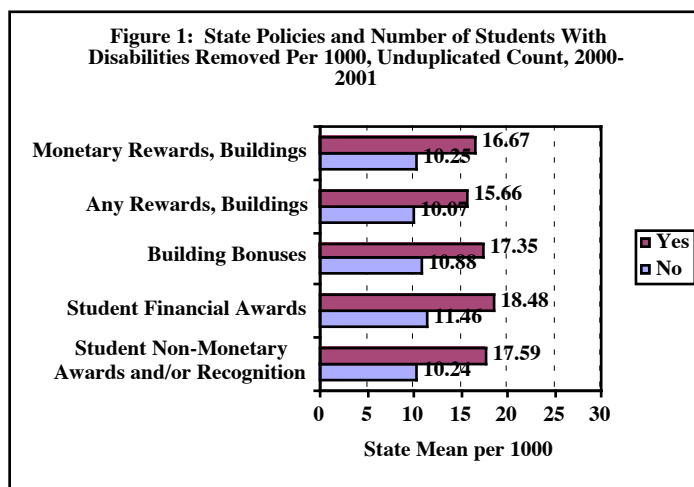
Percentage of Time Outside the Regular Classroom	Discipline, Unduplicated Count
< 21%	-.372**
21 – 60%	.300*
> 60%	.264

**Discussion.** States that have a higher percentage of students with disabilities in regular class 80% or more of the time (< 21% of time outside the regular class) tend to have lower discipline rates. This finding is very supportive of the IDEA requirement that each public agency shall ensure that “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities ... are educated with children who are nondisabled.” If the connection between “better“ LRE rates and “better” discipline rates can be broadly replicated in large-scale and case studies, this finding has potentially powerful implications regarding where schools should educate students with disabilities.

## HIGH STAKES POLICIES AND DISCIPLINE

States with particular high stakes policies, specifically rewards at the building level, tend to have higher discipline rates, defined as the unduplicated count of students removed from school by school personnel or hearing officers and students serving long-term suspensions. Figure 1 shows the state mean for students with disabilities per 1000 removed from school.

**Discussion.** The discipline rates were over 50% higher in states that had rewards at the building level than in states that did not. That was the case for every specific policy included in Figure 1, whether the rewards were monetary or non-monetary and whether the recipients of the rewards were students, staff or the building. The number of students with disabilities per 1000 removed from school appears small. However, the national rate of 14.3 per 1000 represents over 90,000 students with disabilities removed from school.



<sup>1</sup> Indicates a statistically significant relationship at the .01 (\*\*) or .05 (\*) level. The existence of a correlation does not necessarily mean that there is a cause and effect relationship.

## UNRESTRICTED ACCOMMODATIONS AND DISCIPLINE

States with more unrestricted accommodations tend to have lower discipline rates. Table 2 includes several accommodations groupings that are correlated with lower discipline rates.

**Discussion.** The correlation between unrestricted accommodations and discipline is a potentially powerful finding. It is possible that personnel in states that allow more accommodations on tests may also provide more accommodations to address individual student needs during instruction. If students with disabilities are provided more instructional accommodations, they may more easily assimilate into the classroom environment and may be less likely to have discipline problems caused by frustration or feeling out of place.

Type of Accommodations	Discipline, Unduplicated Count
Total Unrestricted Accommodations	-.335*
Total Presentation Accommodations	-.120
Total Equipment Accommodations	-.426**
Total Response Accommodations	-.226
Total Scheduling/Timing Accommodations	-.183
Total Setting Accommodations	-.216

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS, PRACTITIONERS AND PARENTS

- Analyze your data. Are they similar to the national data? If so, consider changes to policy and practice.
- Inform IEP teams, including administrators, teachers and parents of the connection between “better” LRE and “better” discipline rates.
- Make policymakers, district leadership - especially principals who usually lead the process of removing students from school - building staff and parents aware of the linkage between building rewards and higher discipline rates.
- Remind IEP team members of the connection between unrestricted accommodations and better discipline rates.
- Create a culture at the building, district and state level that encourages lower discipline rates, better LRE and more unrestricted accommodations for students with disabilities.
- Provide staff development and parent information materials to align your practices with best practices.

For more detail or information on data sources, go to [www.sscsco.org/saas/](http://www.sscsco.org/saas/) and click on March 2004 Preliminary Findings.

### WHAT IS SAAS?

The purpose of this national study, *State Accountability for All Students (SAAS)*, is to provide policymakers, practitioners and parents with data regarding the connections between state policies and the participation/performance of students with disabilities taking the regular state tests. SAAS is also examining the unintended consequences of high stakes testing for students with disabilities in areas such as placement in the least restrictive environment, graduation rates and discipline. SAAS is an OSEP-funded national study operated by the University of Dayton in cooperation with the School Study Council of Ohio.

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