



Issue Brief: High Stakes Policies and Students with Disabilities

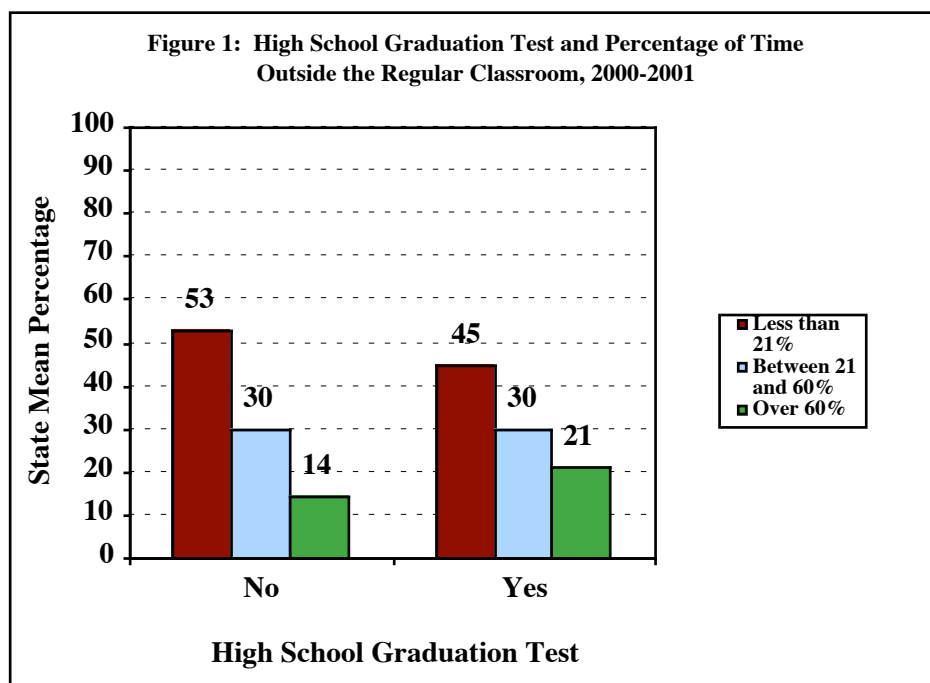
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- **LRE.** States with *graduation tests and/or other high stakes policies* tend to place students with disabilities in **more restrictive settings**.
- **Discipline.** States with *rewards at the building level* tend to have **higher discipline rates** for students with disabilities.

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

States with *particular high stakes policies* such as *high school graduation tests* tend to place students with disabilities in **more restrictive settings**. Figure 1 depicts the percent of students with disabilities placed in various settings in states that have a graduation test compared with states that do not. As Figure 1 depicts, states with graduation tests placed 50% more students outside the regular classroom more than 60% of the time.

Several other statistically significant relationships exist between LRE and sanctions and rewards. Sanctions that tend to be correlated¹ with placing students with disabilities in more restrictive settings include: *the total number of sanctions in a state, states with any sanctions at the building or district level, state takeover of a district and replacement of individual principals or teachers*. Rewards that tend to be correlated with more restrictive placements include *monetary or non-monetary rewards at the building level*.



It is interesting to note that sanctions tend to be correlated with placing students with disabilities in more restrictive settings at both the building and district levels. However, rewards tend to be correlated with placing students with disabilities in more restrictive settings only at the building level.

DISCIPLINE

States with *rewards at the building level* tend to have **higher discipline rates**. Discipline rates are defined as the unduplicated count of students removed from school by school personnel or hearing officers and students serving

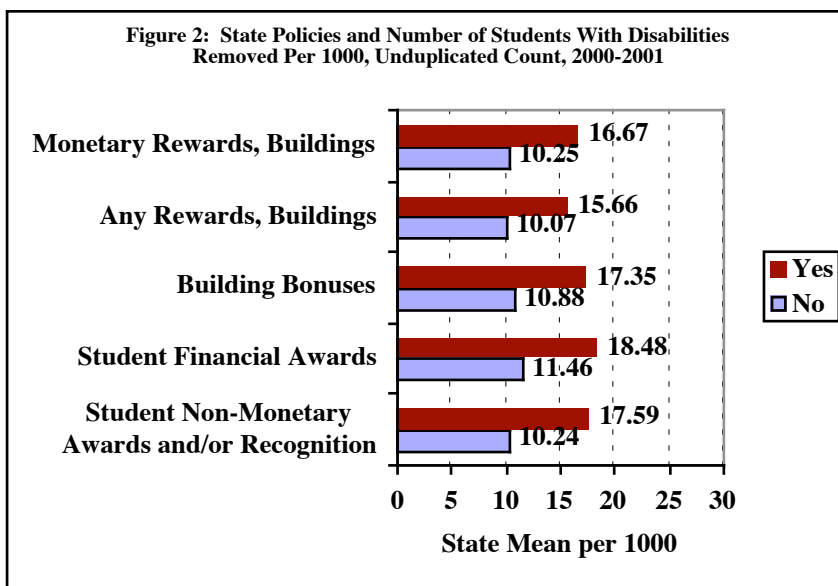
¹ Indicates a statistically significant relationship at the .01 or .05 level. The existence of a correlation does not necessarily mean that there is a cause and effect relationship.

long-term suspensions. Rewards that are correlated with higher discipline rates include: *student non-monetary awards and/or recognition, student financial awards, and bonuses or monetary rewards for buildings.*

It is interesting to note that the discipline rates, on average, were over 50% higher in states that had building level rewards than in states that did not. That was the case in every category included in Figure 2 whether the reward recipients were students, staff or the building.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS, PRACTITIONERS AND PARENTS

- Analyze your data. Are your students placed in more restrictive settings? Are your discipline rates high?
- Provide staff development and create parent information materials, so that IEP teams are aware of the potential negative consequences associated with particular high stakes policies.
- Given *No Child Left Behind's* emphasis on rewards and sanctions, craft rewards and sanctions that encourage better LRE and better discipline rates.



For more detail or information on data sources, go to www.scco.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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