

2025 Condition of Education

# Special Education

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Department of Education

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## SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Iowa reports annually on the conditions and performance of students with disabilities ages 3-21 in the Annual Performance Report (APR) for Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs on Feb. 1 each year. The most recent data is from the 2024-25 school year (or 2023-24, where reporting lags a year), and will be reported in the Federal Fiscal Year 2024 APR, due in February 2026.

Performance is measured every six years using baseline data and input from various stakeholders against state targets set in the State Performance Plan (SPP). Measures of compliance with IDEA are also reported in the SPP and APR. Some of the measures of performance presented in this section are modified from Iowa’s Part B APR, which is accessible in its entirety on the Special Education Public Reporting page of the Department’s website at: <https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/special-education/public-reporting#state-performance-plan-amp-annual-performance-report>

This section includes other measures to address three areas identified by special education stakeholders in the state to monitor and to use to compare the performance and outcomes of students with and without disabilities.

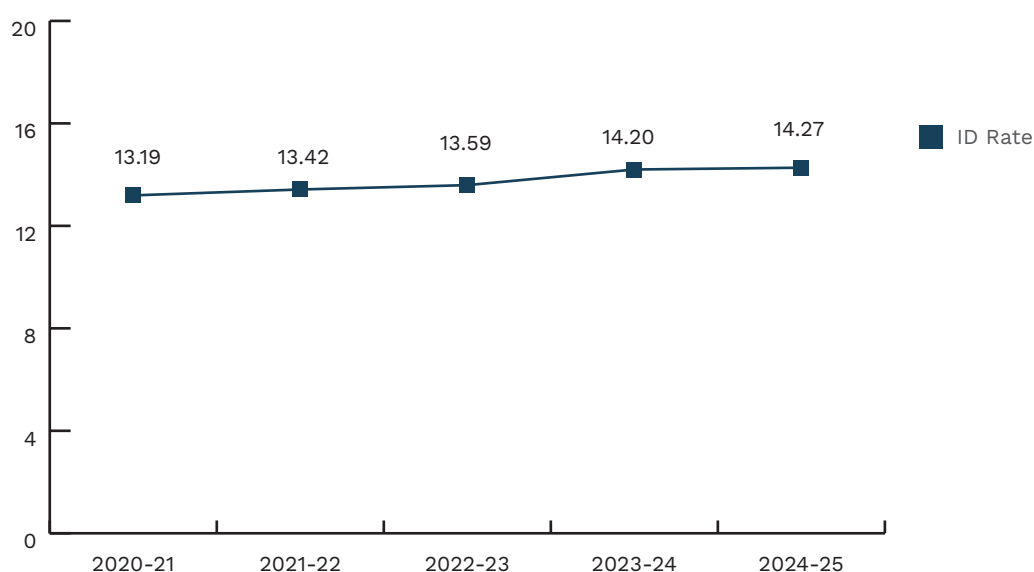
- Students come to school ready to learn.
- Students achieve at high levels.
- Students leave school ready for life.

# CONTEXT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN IOWA

## Identification Rates

The identification rate refers to the percentage of students identified as needing special education services. Figure 2-1 presents the special education identification rate for students ages 6-21 from 2020-21 to 2022-23. The 2023-24 to most recent data represents students age 5 years and in kindergarten to 21. Over the five-year period from the 2020-21 school year to the 2024-25 school year, the rate of identification has increased 1.08 percentage points.

**Figure 2-1: Special Education Identification Rate for Students Ages 5 and in Kindergarten to 21, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



Source: Iowa Department of Education Division of Special Education, ACHIEVE, count files; Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall student files.

Note: 2023-24 to most recent includes ages 5 and in kindergarten to 21; 2022-23 and prior includes ages 6 to 21.

# PLACEMENT

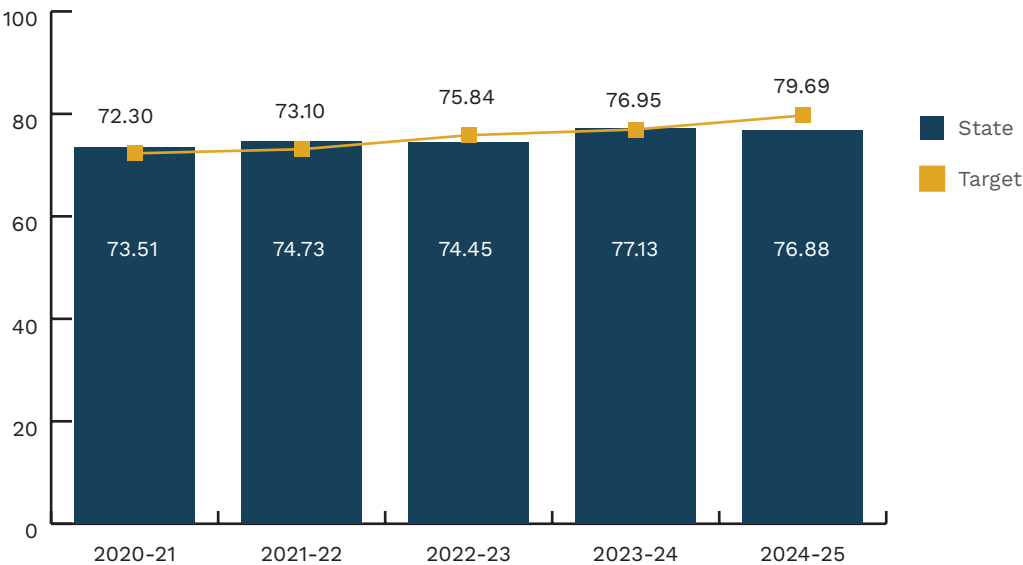
Children and students receiving special education services may be served in a variety of educational settings. Data are collected on educational settings based on the amount of time students spend with their peers in a regular education classroom setting and the percentage of students served in private separate schools, residential placements, homebound or hospital placements. Over time, the percentage of children/students served in a regular classroom setting has increased significantly in Iowa to where it is today.

The following figures show the percentage of students with disabilities ages 6-21 (2020-21 through 2022-23) and ages five and in kindergarten to 21 (2023-24 to most recent) served (1) in the regular education classroom for 80% or more of the school day, (2) in the regular education classroom for less than 40% of the school day, and (3) in private separate schools, residential placements, homebound or hospital placements.

The percentage of students in the regular education classroom setting increased from 2020-21 to 2021-22, with each year exceeding the state target. In 2022-23, the percentage of students in the regular education classroom for 80% or more of the school day was 74.45%, 1.39 percentage points below the 75.84% state target. However, in 2023-24, the state average increased and was above the target of 76.95% again. In 2024-25, the state average decreased to 76.88% and is below the target of 79.69%.

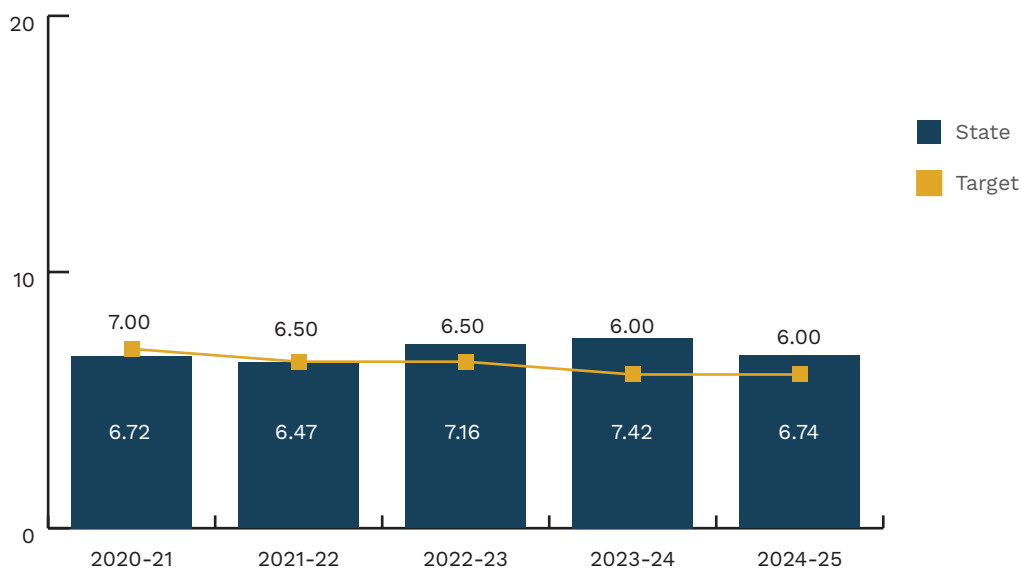
The percentage of students served in the regular education classroom for less than 40% of the school day was 6.74% in 2024-25, a decrease of 0.68 percentage points from the previous year, which is similar to the percentages in 2020-21 and 2021-22. The percentage of students served in other placements was 0.75%, an increase of 0.10 percentage points from the previous year, and is below the target of 1.30%, which is a positive.

**Figure 2-2: Percentage of Students with Disabilities Served in a Regular Education Classroom Setting 80% or More of the School Day, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



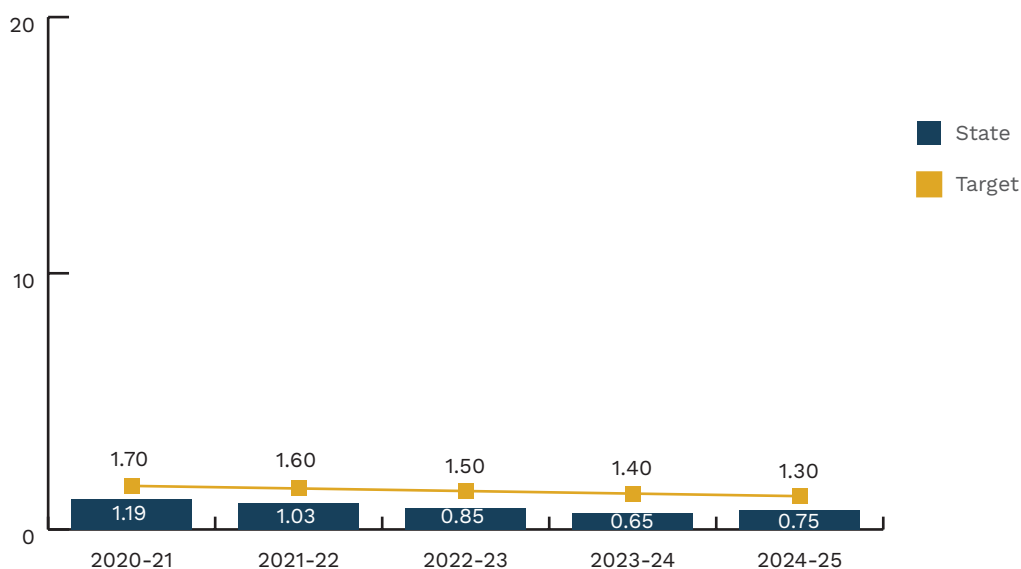
Source: Iowa Department of Education Division of Special Education, ACHIEVE, count files.  
Note: 2023-24 to most recent includes ages 5 and in kindergarten to 21; 2022-23 and prior includes ages 6 to 21.

**Figure 2-3: Percentage of Students with Disabilities Served in a Regular Education Classroom Setting Less than 40% of the School Day, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



Source: Iowa Department of Education Division of Special Education, ACHIEVE, count files.  
 Note: 2023-24 to most recent includes ages 5 and in kindergarten to 21; 2022-23 and prior includes ages 6 to 21.

**Figure 2-4: Percentage of Students with Disabilities Served in Private Separate Schools, Residential Placements, Homebound or Hospital Placements, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



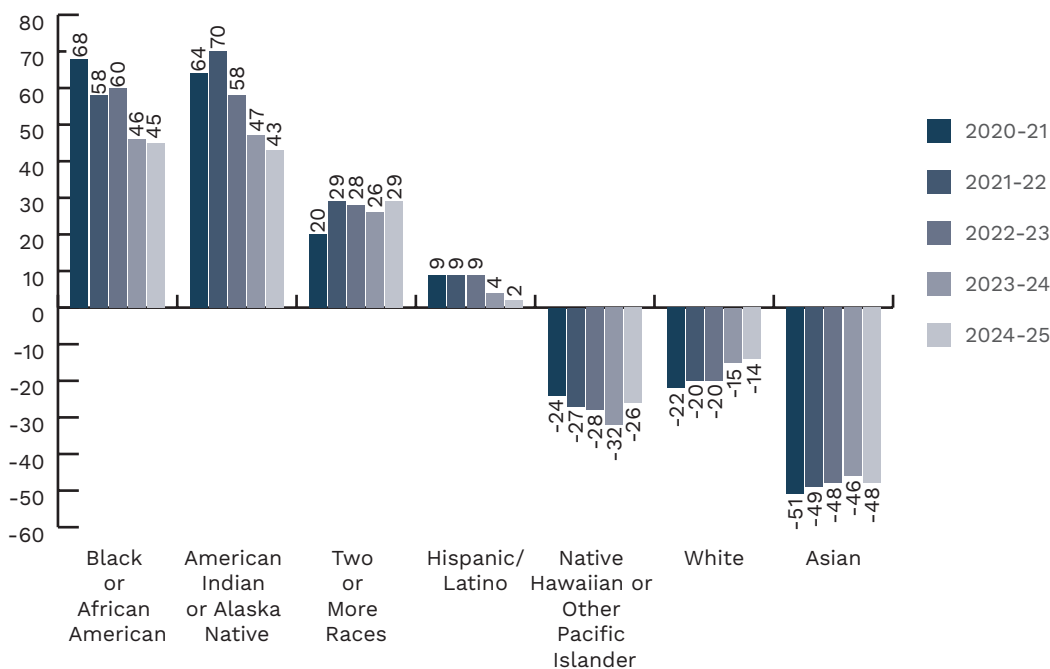
Source: Iowa Department of Education Division of Special Education, ACHIEVE, count files.  
 Note: 2023-24 to most recent includes ages 5 and in kindergarten to 21; 2022-23 and prior includes ages 6 to 21.

# DISPROPORTIONALITY

Disproportionality—percent probability, or likelihood of overrepresentation of racial and/or ethnic groups in special education and related services—is a result of inappropriate identification. Figure 2-5 shows the percentage probability of overrepresentation (positive numbers) or underrepresentation (negative numbers) for each racial/ethnic group, compared to all students.

In 2024-25, Black or African American and American Indian or Alaska Native students had the greatest disproportionality rates of overrepresentation at 45% and 43%, respectively. Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students had the greatest disproportionality rates of underrepresentation at -48% and -26%, respectively. The overidentification of Black or African American students in special education has steadily decreased over the last five years, dropping 23 percentage points from 2020-21 to the 2024-25 school year. Additionally, during the same five-year time frame, the overidentification of American Indian or Alaska Native students is down 27 percentage points from the peak of 70% in 2021-22.

**Figure 2-5: Percentage Probability of Being Placed in Special Education Compared to All Students, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



Source: Iowa Department of Education Division of Special Education, ACHIEVE, count files; Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, fall student files.

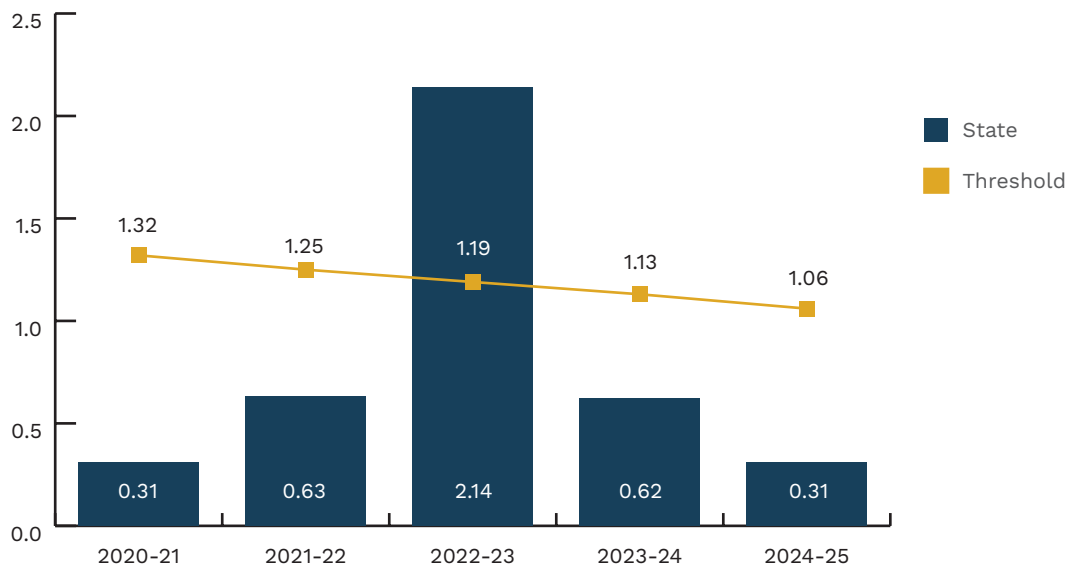
# DISCIPLINE

Data on disciplinary actions taken against students with disabilities are collected and reported for students ages 3-21 who are suspended out of school and/or expelled for a total of more than 10 days in a school year. A district is considered to be significantly discrepant if either of the following occurred:

- The rate ratio for all students in the district with disabilities who receive out-of-school suspension or who are expelled for greater than 10 days in the school year is equal to or greater than 3.50 (percentage of students in the district with disabilities who were suspended or expelled for more than 10 days divided by the percentage of students in the state with disabilities who were suspended or expelled for more than 10 days); or
- The rate ratio for all students in the district from any specific racial or ethnic background with disabilities who receive out-of-school suspension or who are expelled for greater than 10 days in the school year is equal to or greater than 3.50 (percentage of students in the district with disabilities from that racial/ethnic background who were suspended or expelled for more than 10 days divided by the percentage of students in the state with disabilities from that racial/ethnic background who were suspended or expelled for more than 10 days).

Figure 2-6 below shows the percentage of districts considered significantly discrepant based on the percentage of all students with disabilities who received an out-of-school suspension or were expelled for more than 10 days during the school years 2020-21 to 2024-25. The 2024-25 school year was lower than the previous three years and has returned to the percentage in 2020-21 (0.31%). A steady decline in the percentage of districts identified as discrepant has occurred since 2022-23.

**Figure 2-6: Percentage of Districts Significantly Discrepant in Out-of-School Suspensions/Expulsions of Students with Disabilities Greater Than 10 Days, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



Source: Iowa Department of Education Division of Special Education, ACHIEVE, count files; Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, spring student files.



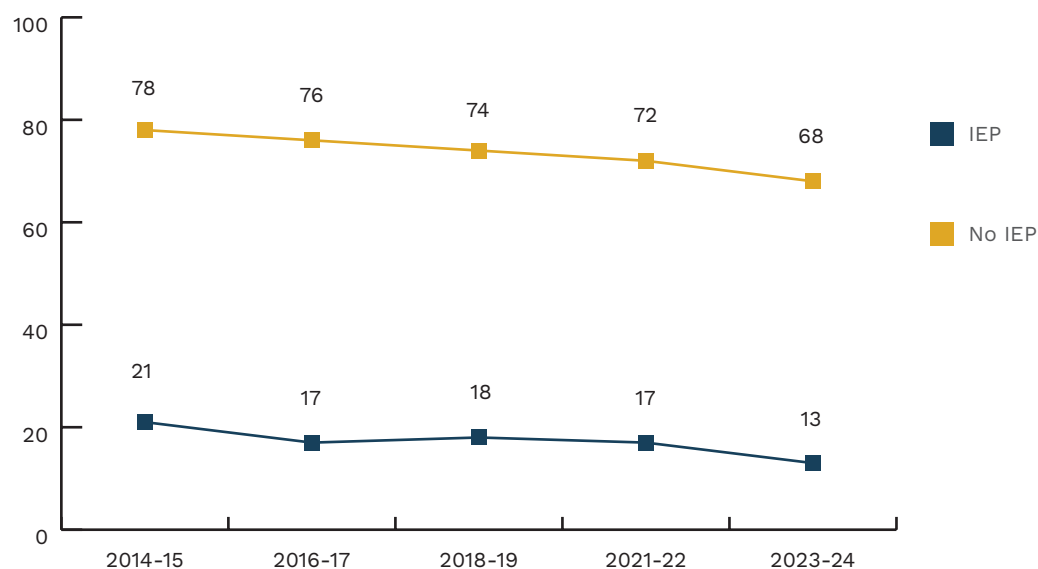
# ARE STUDENTS ACHIEVING AT HIGH LEVELS?

## National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), administered by the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education, is the only national assessment of student achievement. Since 1990, NAEP state assessments have been administered periodically in grades four and eight in the areas of reading, mathematics, science and writing. Historically, the NAEP has been conducted on a two-year cycle, although the 2020-21 administration was postponed due to the pandemic. The most recent data available is from 2023-24.

In the following figures, students with disabilities are those indicated as having an Individualized Education Program (IEP). In 2023-24, 13% of fourth-grade students with IEPs and 68% without IEPs scored at basic or above on NAEP in reading. During the same year, 19% of eighth-grade students with IEPs and 79% of those without IEPs scored at basic or above. The gap in reading proficiency between students with and without IEPs remained the same for fourth-grade students and increased by five percentage points for eighth-grade students compared to the previous results from 2021-22.

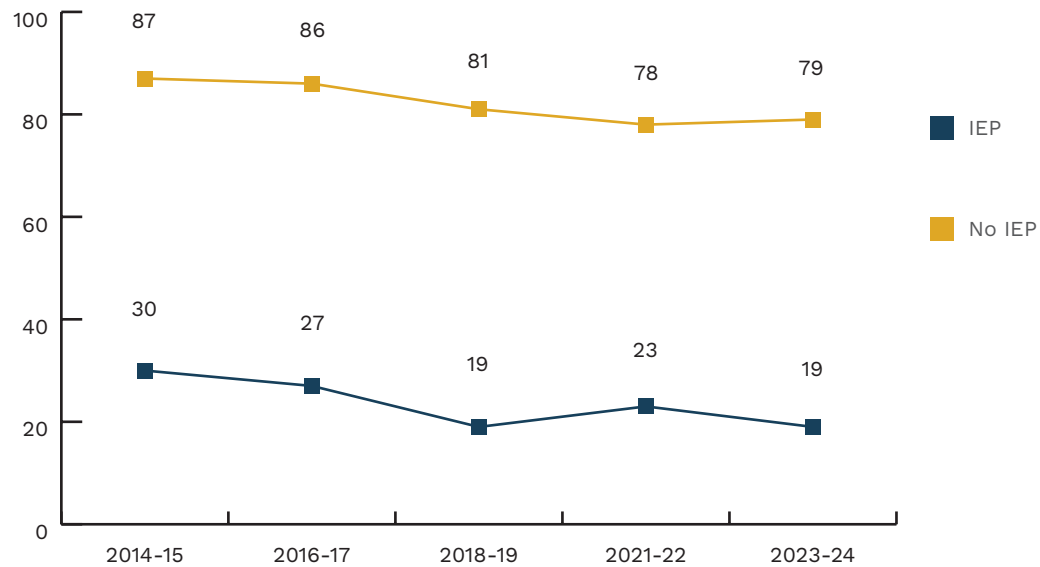
**Figure 2-7: Percentage of Fourth-Grade Students Scoring at Basic or Above on NAEP Reading, 2014-15, 2016-17, 2018-19, 2021-22 and 2023-24**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer.



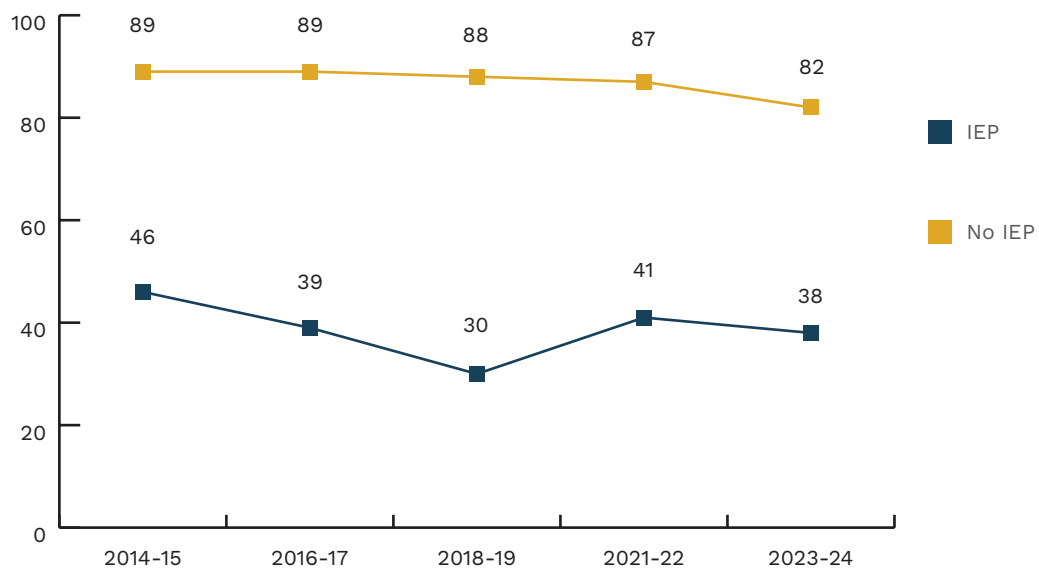
**Figure 2-8: Percentage of Eighth-Grade Students Scoring at Basic or Above on NAEP Reading, 2014-15, 2016-17, 2018-19, 2021-22 and 2023-24**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer.

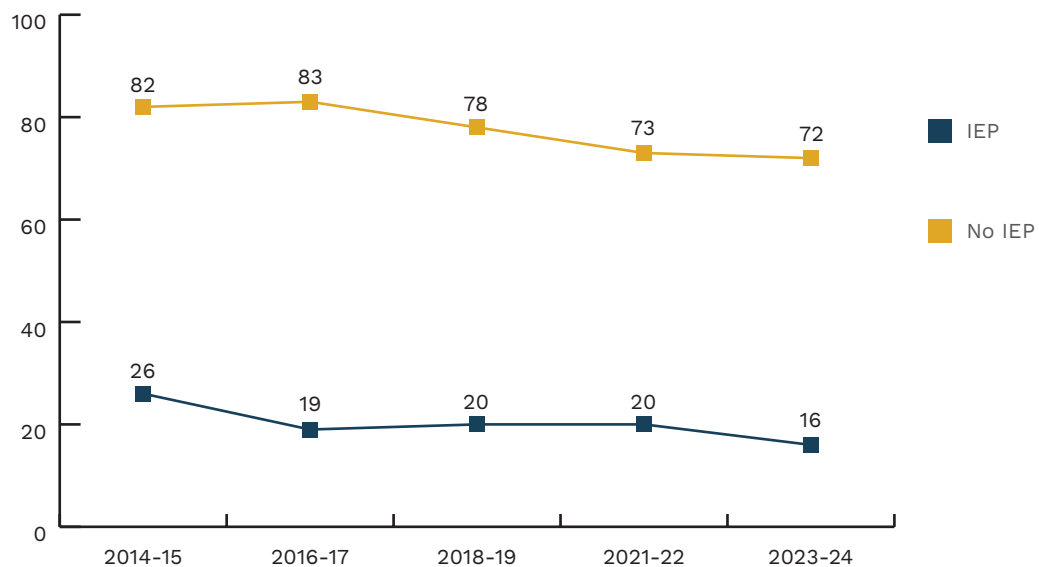
In 2023-24, 38% of fourth-grade students with IEPs and 82% without IEPs scored at basic or above on NAEP in mathematics. During the same year, 16% of eighth-grade students with IEPs and 72% of those without IEPs scored at basic or above. The gap in mathematics proficiency between students with and without IEPs decreased by two percentage points for fourth-grade students and increased by three percentage points for eighth-grade students compared to the previous results from 2021-22.

**Figure 2-9: Percentage of Fourth-Grade Students Scoring at Basic or Above on NAEP Mathematics, 2014-15, 2016-17, 2018-19, 2021-22 and 2023-24**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer.

**Figure 2-10: Percentage of Eighth-Grade Students Scoring at Basic or Above on NAEP Mathematics, 2014-15, 2016-17, 2018-19, 2021-22 and 2023-24**



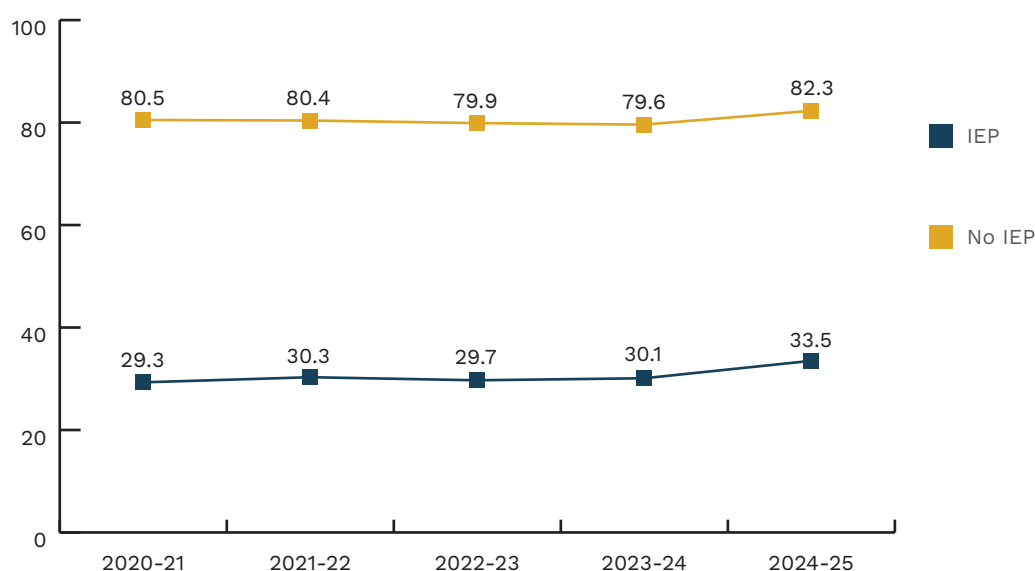
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP Data Explorer.

# PROFICIENCY ON STATE ASSESSMENTS

The Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) is Iowa's one standardized state assessment that all school districts and state-accredited nonpublic schools administer each spring to students in grades 3-11. Developed by Iowa Testing Programs at the University of Iowa, the ISASP replaced the Iowa Assessments as the state's accountability test for Iowa students beginning in 2018-19. Because the ISASP is a new and different assessment, results should not be compared to years prior to 2018-19. Students with significant cognitive disabilities may take the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment in lieu of the ISASP assessment.

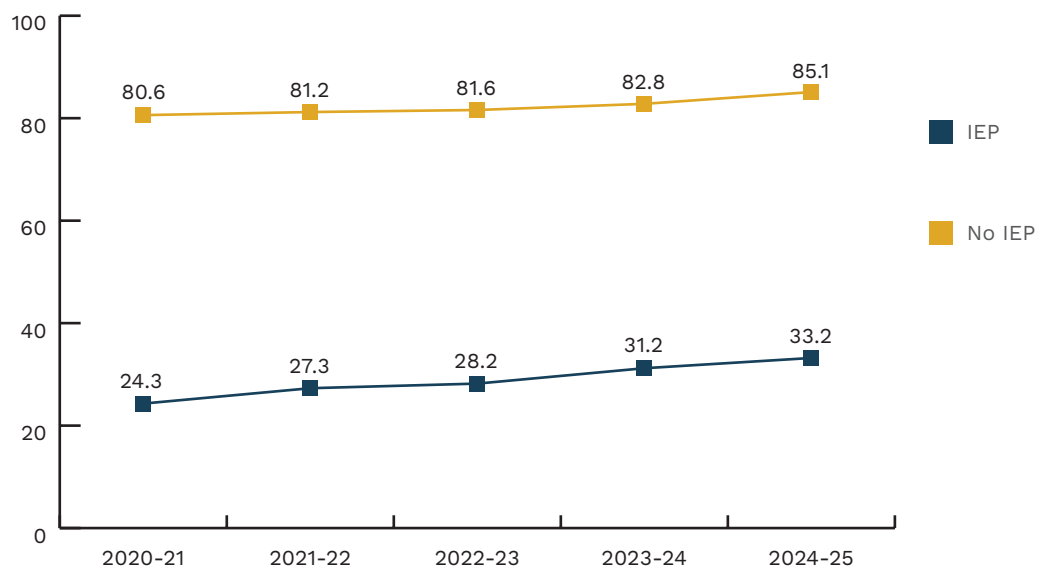
Figures 2-11 to 2-16 show the percentage of fourth-, eighth- and 11th-grade students proficient in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics from 2020-21 to 2024-25. In the figures, students with disabilities, including those taking the alternate assessment, are indicated as having an IEP.

**Figure 2-11: Percentage of Fourth-Grade Students Proficient in English Language Arts on State Assessments, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



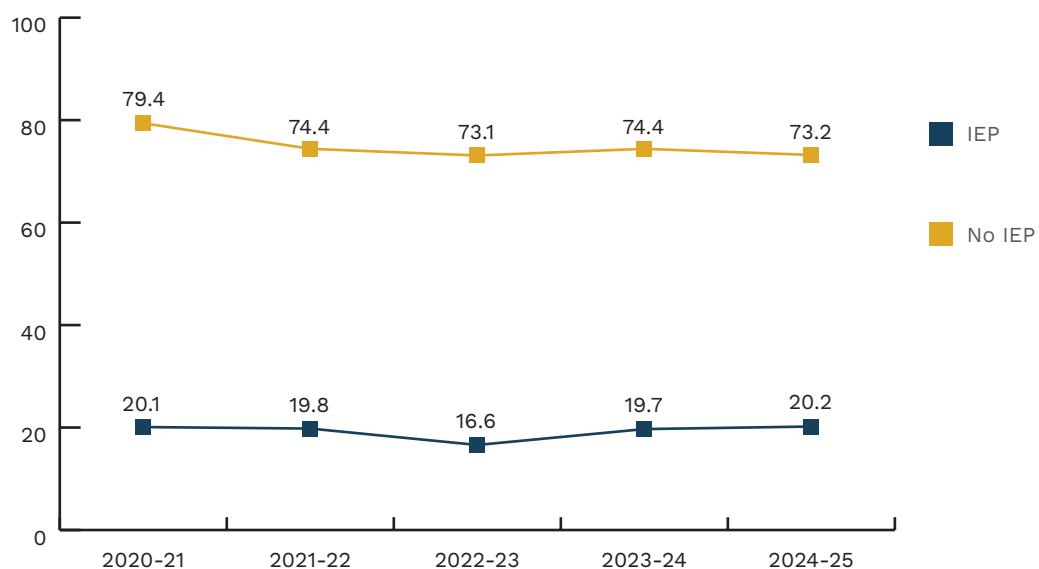
Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, assessment files.  
Note: This data includes both the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment.

**Figure 2-12: Percentage of Eighth-Grade Students Proficient in English Language Arts on State Assessments, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



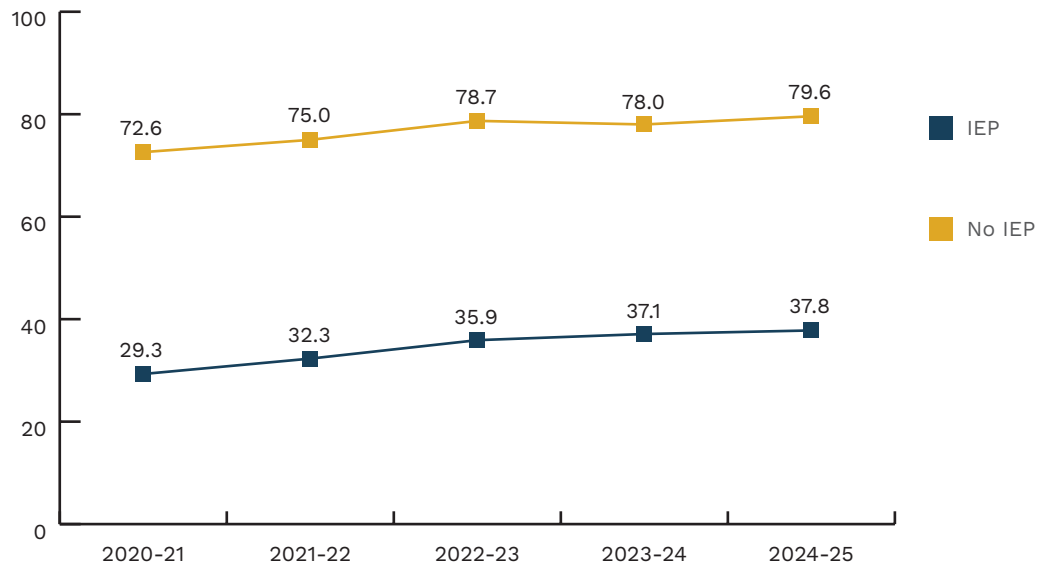
Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, assessment files.  
 Note: This data includes both the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment.

**Figure 2-13: Percentage of 11th-Grade Students Proficient in English Language Arts on State Assessments, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



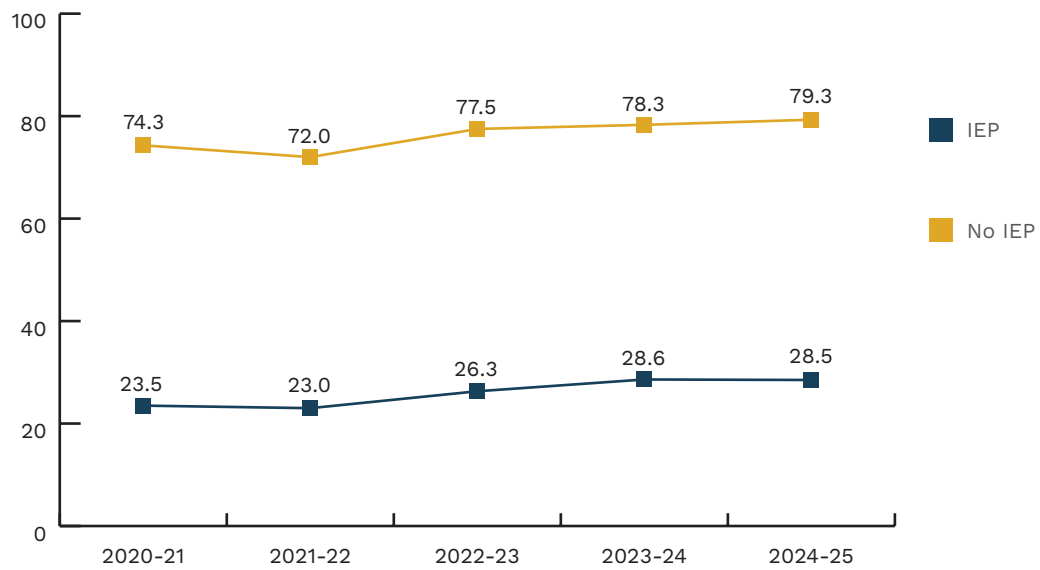
Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, assessment files.  
 Note: This data includes both the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment.

**Figure 2-14: Percentage of Fourth-Grade Students Proficient in Mathematics on State Assessments, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



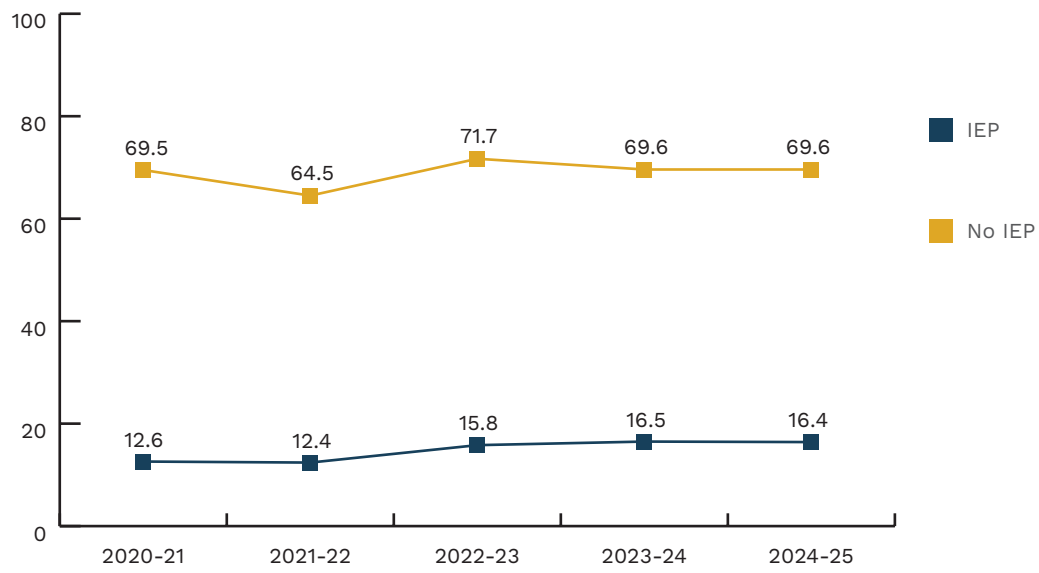
Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, assessment files.  
 Note: This data includes both the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment.

**Figure 2-15: Percentage of Eighth-Grade Students Proficient in Mathematics on State Assessments, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, assessment files.  
 Note: This data includes both the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment.

**Figure 2-16: Percentage of 11th-Grade Students Proficient in Mathematics on State Assessments, 2020-21 to 2024-25**



Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, assessment files.  
Note: This data includes both the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment.

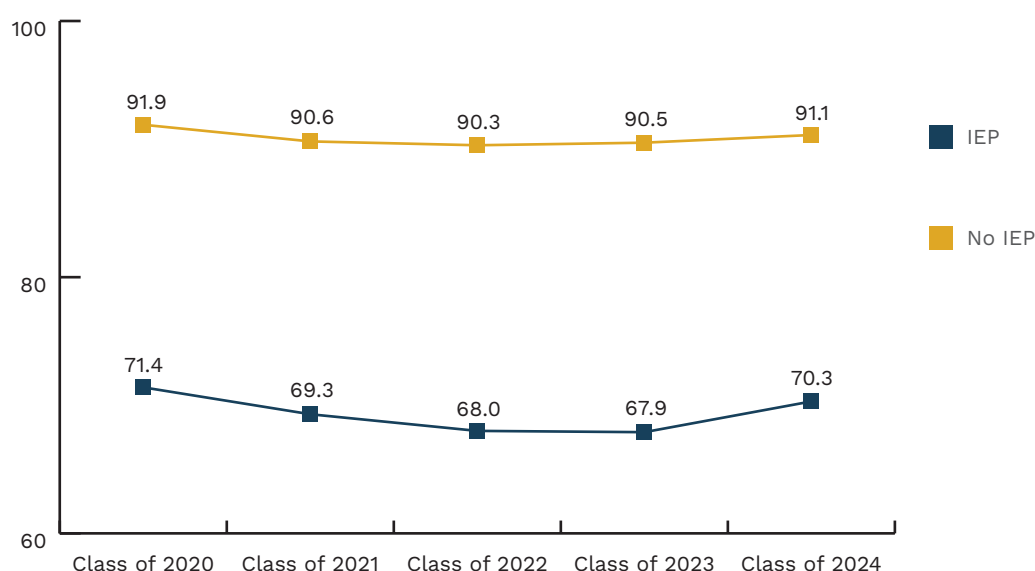
# ARE STUDENTS LEAVING SCHOOL READY FOR LIFE?

## Graduation Rates

This section reports the Iowa public school four-year and five-year cohort graduation rates for high school students with disabilities (as indicated by having an IEP) and those without disabilities.

The four-year graduation rate for the class of 2024 was 70.3% for students with disabilities, which is 20.8 percentage points below the rate for students without disabilities (91.1%). The five-year graduation rate for the class of 2023, the most recent data available, was 75.5% for students with disabilities, 16.6 percentage points below the rate for students without disabilities (92.1%).

**Figure 2-17: Iowa Public School Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rates for the Graduating Classes of 2020 to 2024**

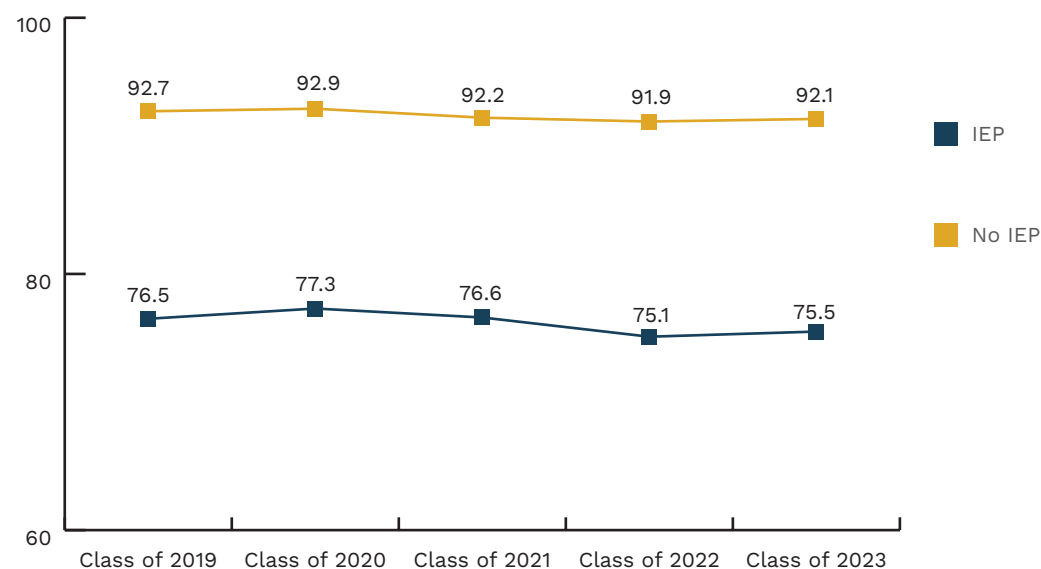


Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, spring student files.

Note: An issue was identified in the business logic for calculating the adjusted cohort graduation rate that was corrected in spring 2024. Data for these reported graduating classes have been corrected in this report and differ from previously published graduation rate data.



**Figure 2-18: Iowa Public School Five-Year Cohort Graduation Rates for the Graduating Classes of 2019 to 2023**



Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Performance and Analytics, Student Reporting in Iowa, spring student files.  
Note: An issue was identified in the business logic for calculating the adjusted cohort graduation rate that was corrected in spring 2024. Data for these reported graduating classes have been corrected in this report and differ from previously published graduation rate data.



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