INTRODUCTION

- Longstanding federal mandates for educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment
- Research demonstrates the benefits of inclusive, general education classroom placements for students with ESN
- Research suggests separate schools may offer limited access to social networks, friendships, and augmentative/alternative communication options.
- Only 17.4% of students with intellectual disability were fully included in 2018, 6.8% were in separate schools.

Research Questions
1. How does the percentage of separate schools vary across locales (city, suburb, town, rural) for states with low, medium, and high separate school placement rates for students with ESN?
2. What is the relationship between the percentage of separate schools in each locale and overall placement rates of students with ESN in separate schools?
3. How do the number and location of separate special education charter schools in each state in the United States vary across the last decade and to what extent do they appear to specialize in students with ESN?

METHODS

Research Design
This study used state-level data files on IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environments from the OSEP and the NCES. Descriptive statistics and a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used to analyze the data.

Data Analysis
Several percentages were calculated. For each state, the percentage of the students with ESN in separate schools, and the percentage of separate schools by locale (city, suburban, town, rural) were calculated, as well as the national mean percentage of students with ESN in separate schools that includes all 50 states and D.C. The formula is listed for each percentage by research questions. All the percentages were calculated for each year. Finally, MANOVAs were completed to determine whether there was an association between the percentage of separate schools in each locale and a state’s placement rate group (high, medium, low).

RESULTS

RQ 1. - The percentage of separate schools varied from 1,825 nationwide in 2012-13 to 1,669 in 2019-20. Most of them (~1200 each year) were in cities and suburbs.

Table 1. Percentage of Students With ESN in Separate Schools in 2012–13 and 2019–20.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage of students with ESN in separate schools</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 states + D.C.</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ 2. - The correlation analysis indicates a relationship between the percentage of suburban separate schools and overall separate school placement rate for students with ESN.

DISCUSSION

- There are states—a collection in the Midwest and a larger group in the Mid-Atlantic and New England—in which the percentage of students with ESN placed in separate schools is above the national average in 2019–2020. These findings may warrant further investigation into these states to see what contributes to this result.
- With the variability across districts and states for how separate schools are defined, what contribute to the variability, and how to interpret the definitions of a separate school is warranted.
- States and districts should also consider providing technical assistance in promoting high-quality inclusive placement options for students with ESN, similar to an initiative implemented in Kentucky (Kleiner & Kears, 2022).

REFERENCES

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