

**State Policy and its Effect on Educational Environments**

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**Goal of the Study**

Determine which state policies, if any, correlate to the educational placements of students with disabilities.

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**Elements of the Study**

- State Performance, 2012-2015: Students with disabilities (SWD) in inclusive classroom  $\geq$  80% of the school day
- State Policies for Educator Licensure, Educator Preparation Programs, and K-12 State Funding

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### Impacts Measured

- Effect of individual policies and combinations of policies and if the effect was positive or negative
- Power of the state policies' effect size

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### Data Sources

- United States Department of Education (USDoE) Child Count and Educational Environments
- State agreements with Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

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### Data Sources

- State policies and characteristics
  - Coursework related to students with disabilities
  - Clinical experiences in a setting with students with disabilities
  - General Education License as pre- or co-requisite for Special Education License
  - Availability of dual licensure/certification preparation programs
  - State's average K-12 per-pupil expenditures

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## USDoE Data Set

- 50 States, Washington, D.C., all U.S. Territories
- Students age 6-21, counts by educational environment
  - Correctional Facilities
  - Home
  - Homebound/Hospital
  - Inside Regular Class  $\leq 40\%$  of the day
  - Inside Regular Class 40 – 79% of the day
  - Inside Regular Class  $\geq 80\%$  of the day

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## Data Set for Study

- 50 States, Washington, D.C., all U.S. Territories
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## Analysis

There were statistically significant differences in the percentage of SWD in the inclusive classroom on independent samples t-tests (2-tailed) for three policy conditions:

1. requiring all candidates for all licensure areas to complete coursework and/or clinical experiences specific to students with disabilities;

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## Analysis

2. CAEP agreements combined with a requirement for all candidates for all licensure areas to complete coursework and/or clinical experiences specific to students with disabilities; and
3. requiring all candidates for all licensure areas to complete coursework and/or clinical experiences specific to students with disabilities as well as having dual certification/licensure programs available in the state.

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## Findings: Top-Performing States

- $\geq$  90th percentile each year, 2012 - 2015:
  - Alabama
  - Nebraska
  - North Dakota
  - Vermont

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Year	State	# Candidates with Disabilities (SMD) Age 6 to 21	% of SMD Age 6 to 21 in Inclusive Setting	State Requires CAEP Accreditation for all Ed Prep Providers	State Requires Educators to Complete Coursework Related to SMD	State Requires a General Education Credential as a Prerequisite for Special Education Credential	Dual Certification Programs Available in the State	State Offers Collaborative Special Education License	State Offers Special Education Weight License	State Offers Special Education Endorsement
2012	Alabama	60,555	83.68%	Y	Y			Y		
	North Dakota	8,689	76.02%	Y		Y			Y	
	Nebraska	30,084	74.86%	Y	Y					
	Vermont	8,885	73.78%	Y	Y		Y			Y
2013	Alabama	61,671	83.83%	Y	Y			Y		
	North Dakota	8,689	75.32%	Y		Y			Y	
	Nebraska	31,035	74.59%	Y	Y					
	Vermont	8,991	74.15%	Y	Y		Y			Y

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Year	State	# Students with Disabilities (SWD) Age 6 to 21	% of SWD Age 6 to 21 in Inclusive Setting	State Requires CAEP Accreditation for all Ed Prep Providers	State Requires Educators to Complete Coursework Related to SWD	State Requires a General Education Credential as a Prerequisite for Special Education Credential	Dual Certification Programs Available in the State	State Offers Collaborative Special Education License	State Offers Special Educator Strategist License	State Offers Special Education Endorsement
2014	Alabama	62,894	83.63%	Y	Y			Y		
	Nebraska	31,855	76.07%	Y	Y					
	Vermont	9,133	74.93%		Y		Y			Y
	North Dakota	8,827	74.58%	Y		Y			Y	
2015	Alabama	64,268	83.56%	Y	Y			Y		
	Vermont	9,189	75.76%		Y		Y			Y
	Nebraska	31,905	75.54%	Y	Y					
	North Dakota	8,875	74.08%	Y		Y			Y	

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### Absence of Common Policy Factors Among Leading States

- Alabama is the only state with a “collaborative special educator license”;
- North Dakota is the only state with a “special education strategist” license;
- Nebraska has detailed special education course requirements for all candidates;
- Vermont has a special education endorsement and the University of Vermont offers a special education dual endorsement program;
- neither Nebraska nor North Dakota offer any dual licensure programs; and
- state K-12 Funding levels did not correlate with leading performance in the study.

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### Findings: Low-Performing States

- Hawaii
- Montana
- New Jersey - Longstanding dual licensure programs
- New Mexico - Longstanding dual licensure programs

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## Ohio



- 2012 = 60.187%, Rank = 36 of 51
- 2013 = 61.095%, Rank = 34 of 51
- 2014 = 61.353%, Rank = 33 of 51
- 2015 = 62.282%, Rank = 33 of 51

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## Findings: Policy Effect

- No single state policy correlates to consistently high percentages of SWD being placed in inclusive classrooms  $\geq$  80% of the school day.
- Consistently high-performing states have multiple policies in place to prepare and deploy educators to meet the needs of SWD in an inclusive setting.

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## Alabama: Top-Performing State



1. Collaborative Special Educator License
2. Requires CAEP Approval
3. Clinical experience requirements for all candidates include:
  - field experiences or internships that include students with exceptionalities;
  - opportunities for candidates to develop and demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions for helping all students learn; and
  - survey of education course.

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## A Closer Look: Alabama



- The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) led a statewide effort to reduce the high number (12) of sub-specializations related to specific disabilities in this educator licensure structure.
- ALSDE and the State Board hosted convenings across the state to discuss the concept of a collaborative special educator license.
- ALSDE developed 11 demonstration sites for PD and coaching.

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## Alabama: Student Outcomes



- Alabama's student test results show that SWD in inclusive classrooms achieved academic gains at faster trajectories than their peers without disabilities in the same classroom.
- In demonstration sites from Fall 2015 to Fall 2016:
  - Median unexcused absences per month dropped from 156.41 to 128.02.
  - Median tardiness occurrences dropped from 262.94 to 158.51.
  - Median chronic absences dropped from 65.14 to 41.00

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## Alabama: Outcomes and Change in Approach



- In February 2018, WestEd National Center for Systemic Improvement highlighted Alabama's results:
  - 88% of SWD in the demonstration sites showed gains on progress monitoring
  - 48% of SWD in the same schools posted gains on the ACT Aspire.
- ALSDE has made a shift from being a regulatory agency to being an agency that provides facilitation and support to the state's schools and educators.

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## Findings

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- Alabama and North Dakota have specific licenses in place to address communication and collaboration needed for authentically inclusive environments.
- State policy combined with state-led facilitation and supportive action can effect positive change.

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## Future Research

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- Effects of state policy by specific disability, by limited English proficiency, by ethnicity, and by characteristics of rurality or urbanity
- Variances between schools deploying collaborative special educators or special education strategists

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## Recommendations

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- Policy leaders should examine the state's licensure policies, evaluating the effect on preparing educators with the skills and competencies needed for collaboration in an inclusive setting.
- States must close the gap that exists in preparing and deploying general educators and special educators.

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## Recommendations

- Once a state identifies optimal credentialing requirements, state leaders must demonstrate the courage and diligence to implement change management strategies and support.
- In turn, K-12 schools and EPPs will need to make major shifts away from their past practices.

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## Discussion

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