

## Series 3 | Week 2: Exploring the College Enrollment Gap for Students With Disabilities

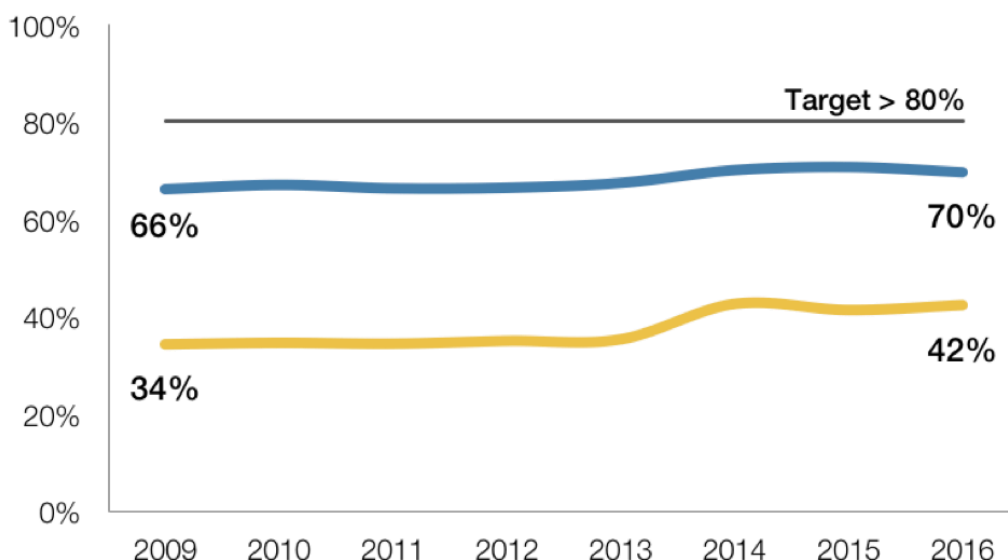
### About the Data Dialogue Series

Thank you for participating in the New England Secondary School Consortium's (NESSC) Data Dialogue Series, an opportunity to explore, reflect on, and talk about our region's education data with your students, colleagues, and community.

This week, let's further explore the relationship between student disability status and educational attainment by considering the percentage of New England's high school graduates with disabilities who enroll in college and how trends have changed over time.

### Exploring the Data

**College Enrollment Rates: Students With Disabilities (All NESSC)**

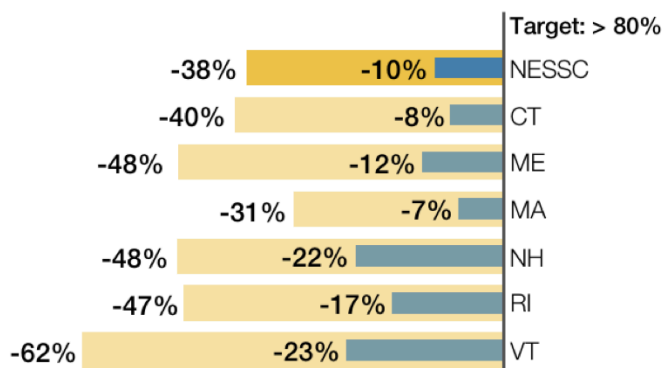


College enrollment for **students without disabilities** increased by four percentage points between 2009 and 2016, while the enrollment rate for **students with disabilities** shows an increase of eight percentage points.

However, much of this increase can be attributed to the addition of Massachusetts data to the regional dataset. **Students with disabilities** in Massachusetts enroll in college at a higher rate than in the other NESSC states, which caused the regional average to rise by about seven percentage points in 2014 (the first year for which data from Massachusetts is included in this report). The enrollment rate for **students without disabilities** rose by three percentage points with the addition of Massachusetts.

## College Enrollment Rates: Students With Disabilities (Class of 2016)

Distance from target by state (percentage points)



Enrollment rate & number of students by state

	Students w/ Disabilities		Students w/o Disabilities	
NESSC	42.2%	9,195	69.7%	87,431
CT	40.5%	1,920	72.0%	24,329
ME	32.1%	611	67.8%	7,115
MA	49.1%	5,467	73.3%	40,964
NH	32.0%	637	58.2%	6,650
RI	32.9%	434	63.4%	5,259
VT	18.1%	126	56.6%	3,114

College enrollment rates for **students with disabilities** graduating in 2016 vary widely across states. Neither students with disabilities nor their peers have approached the NESSC target college enrollment rate of more than 80%.

### What This Means & Why It Matters

The visuals included in this series illustrate emerging trends across New England about which students are most likely to go on to college after completing high school.

You may remember from last week's data that students with disabilities graduate from high school at substantially lower rates as compared to students without disabilities. Given this trend, it is not surprising that similar patterns appear in the college enrollment data. And similar to high school graduation trends, the substantial gap in college enrollment rates between students with disabilities and their peers has remained steady over time.

It is interesting, though, to consider the variation in college enrollment rates for students with disabilities when we look at the data broken out by state. The enrollment rate gap ranges from 24 to 39 percentage point differences between student groups across states. This suggests that, while college enrollment rate gaps persist, targeted supports and innovative interventions can make a difference for increasing college access for students with disabilities.

### Reflection & Dialogue Questions

While the visuals are a rich starting point for personal reflection, we urge you to consider exploring the data through inclusive conversations with colleagues, students, parents, and community members.

1. These visuals show regional trends across New England, which were calculated by aggregating state-level data (meaning that your school's data contributed to this trend). What do you notice about the trends in each state? What does this make you wonder about the student outcomes for your school? What additional data do you need in order to understand how college enrollment plays out in your school? Where can you find that data?

2. What is the lens that you use to observe and interpret the data (e.g., gender, age, role, expertise, etc.)? What bias might be present in your analysis of the data? What assumptions do you hold about the subject of the data? How does the lens that you view the data through influence what you see in the data?
3. What steps could your school district take to become a place where all students are engaged and are able to successfully pursue post-secondary options, including college?

To further explore conversations on expanding college access to students with disabilities, we encourage you to review the [Improving College and Career Readiness for Students with Disabilities issue brief](#) published by the American Institutes for Research.

**Would you like to share your reflection with the NESSC?  
Don't hesitate to reach out at [info@newenglandssc.org](mailto:info@newenglandssc.org).**