

Experiences of LPS Students with Disabilities

Lawrence Alliance for Education Presentation

December 13, 2023

Diana Santiago, Senior Attorney

Lawrence Parents

Judely Henriquez

Mariel Batista

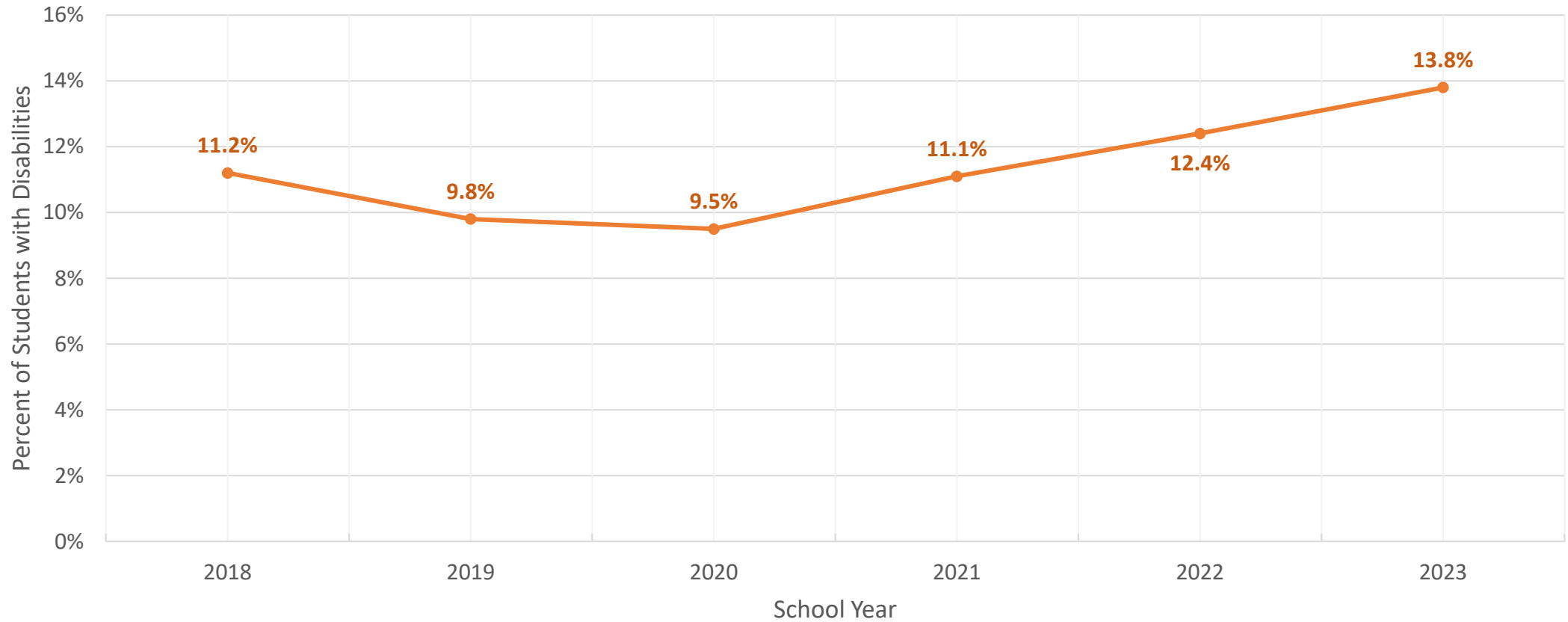
Yaritza Rizzo

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

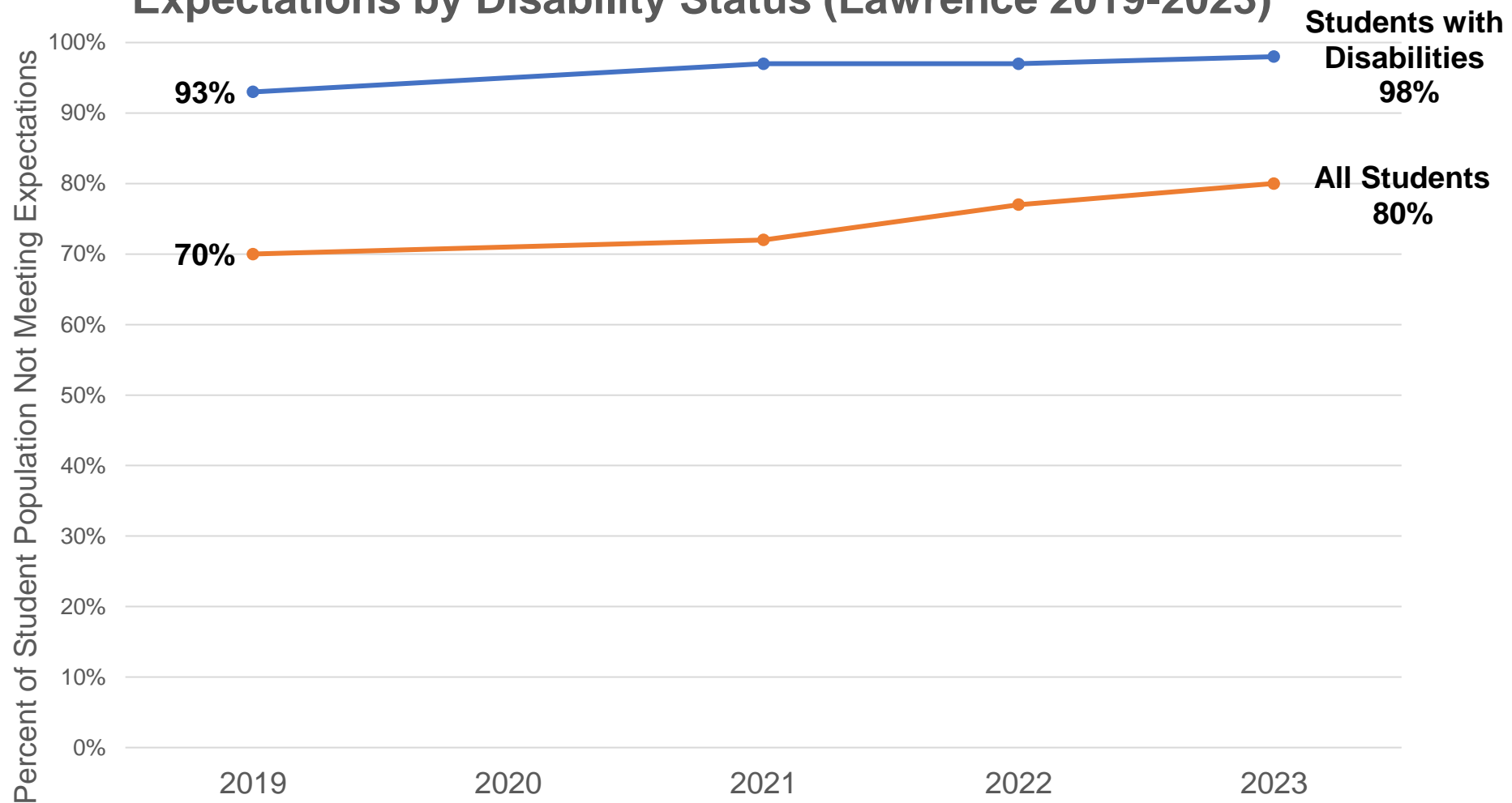
- For over 50 years our mission has been to remove barriers to educational and life opportunities for children and youth.
- Individual and systemic advocacy at the school district, state agency, and legislative levels.
- Parent and professional training, and community engagement.
- Lawrence parent group and individual advocacy informing Lawrence district-level advocacy for nearly 15 years.

Special Education in Lawrence Public Schools

Students with Disabilities in Substantially Separate Classrooms (Ages 6-21) Lawrence (2018-2023)

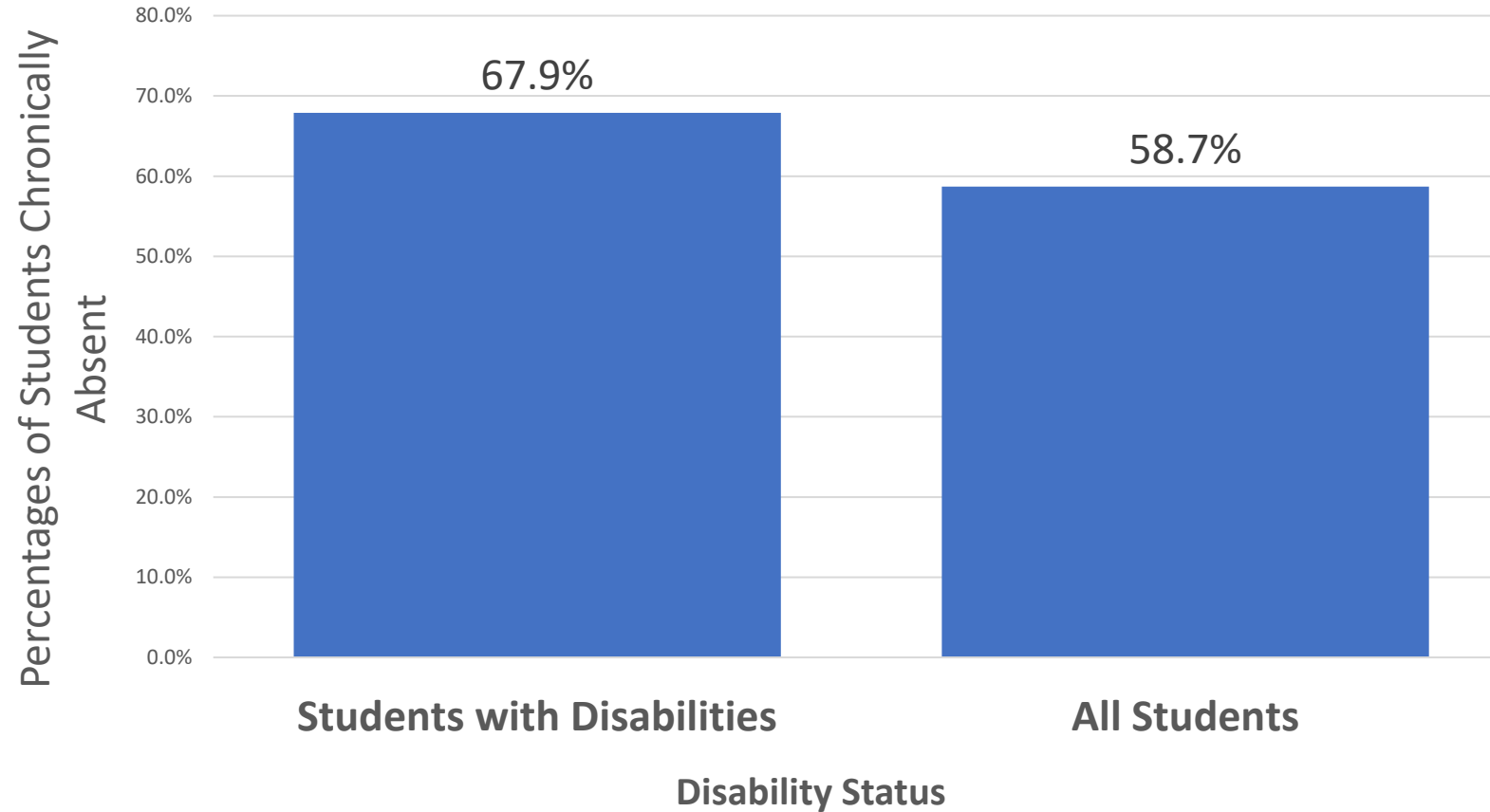


MCAS (10th Grade, ELA) - Percent Not Meeting Expectations by Disability Status (Lawrence 2019-2023)



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School and District Profiles. (2023). *Next Generation MCAS Achievement Results*. Retrieved from: <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/nextgenmcas.aspx>.

Lawrence Chronic Absenteeism by Disability Status (2023)



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School and District Profiles. (2023). *Student Attendance*. Retrieved from: <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/attendance.aspx>.

Other Priority Concerns

- Post-pandemic learning loss and increased mental/behavioral health needs
- Students not receiving IEP services due to staffing shortages and classrooms lacking required teacher training and support
- Lowered expectations
- Parent engagement
- Transportation services


Inclusion Leads to Better Educational Outcomes

Research:

- Improved academic, communication, and social skills of students with disabilities
- Nondisabled students also benefit from inclusive placements¹

Law:

- Students must be in general education classes with necessary instruction and services to the maximum extent appropriate²

 *Inclusion does NOT mean “dumping” students in general education settings without the supplementary aids and services they require.*

¹Wehmeyer, M., Shogren, K.A., & Kurth, J. (2021). The State of Inclusion With Students With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in the United States. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 18 (1) 36–43.

² 34 CFR 300.114(a); 603 CMR 28.06(2).

Lawrence is Well-Situated to Apply these Best Practices and Increase Opportunities for Inclusion

- Lawrence SEPAC creates a space for parents to provide input and share experiences with the district.
- Student Support Services Dept has devoted resources, including staffing and support to expand inclusionary options.
- Efforts to implement Collaborative Problem Solving to reduce disciplinary exclusion and increase problem solving skills among staff and students.

Lawrence Parents

Judely Henriquez
Mother of Ozias
(2nd grade)





Maribel Batista
Mother of Sean
(9th grade)

Yaritza Rizzo
Mother of Alejandro
(post graduate program)

Lawrence SEPAC Chair



Questions