

Least Restrictive Environment

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)

A key element of Section 504 and IDEA is the provision of services in the LRE. The LRE clause mandates that districts must educate students with disabilities in the general education classroom, along with their non-disabled peers, to the maximum extent appropriate. LRE recognizes that some SPED students may be fully capable of participating in general education classroom with varying levels of support, while others need smaller, tightly structured, and highly specialized learning environments. Determining the LRE requires an individualized inquiry into their unique educational needs to determine the possible range of aids and services needed to facilitate the best student.

I. Inclusion

The philosophy underlying the inclusion movement asserts that schools should bring services to students, rather than bringing students to services.

- The SPED teacher goes into the general education classroom to support students with special needs in the general education setting.
- The SPED teacher may co-teach with the general education teacher (ideally collaborating closely), work with a small group of SPED and non-SPED students, or focus on the students who receive SPED services.

II. The Continuum of Services

The Continuum of Services provided to students with special needs offers a range from the least restrictive to the most restrictive. The “levels” or “intensity” of placement (the first 4 are the most common) from least restrictive to most restrictive are:

- Mainstreaming & Inclusion: Support in the general education classroom as:
 - *Indirect Services* -consultations between the SPED teacher and the general education teacher that focus on adjusting the learning environment and/or modifying and adapting instructional techniques and methods for certain students.
 - *Direct Services* -provide specially designed instruction delivered by a SPED teacher to individual and/or small groups to provide

extra assistance and customized instruction; may also address educational needs directly related to the student's disability that may not be related to academic instruction.

- Pullout Services/Resource Room -programs in which students who qualify for SPED services are pulled-out of regular classrooms for designated period of time, less than 50% of that student's academic day.
- Self-contained classrooms -serve students with disabilities whose needs cannot be met in the general education class, even with supplementary aids and services.
- Separate Day School -off-site programs offering highly specialized educational, social, psychological and medical services.
- Residential Treatment -programs provided for students whose severe educational needs require related and rehabilitative services on a 24-hour basis.
- Home and Hospital Care -educational services provided to students with disabilities who are unable to attend school in either a public or private facility for an extended period of time.

III. Approaches for Delivering SPED Services

Approaches for Delivering SPED Services in cooperation with other school professionals include:

- Consultation - SPED teacher offers recommendations to regular educator to meet the needs of a student's IEP. SPED teacher may also spend some time providing direct service.
- Collaboration - used by most resource teachers and many self-contained teachers to work with regular educators. SPED teacher provides greater amount of direct service than in consultation. Requires the SPED teacher to get info from the regular educator about the general curriculum or areas of need.
- Team Teaching - students with disabilities are educated with age-appropriate peers in the general education classroom by both special and general educators.