

Least Restrictive Environment and Placement Determinations for Informed FAPE Offers



- For Presentation to CDS and Cohort 1 of the SAUs Providing FAPE to Preschool Children with Disabilities
- 3/26/2025

Agenda

- Least Restrictive Environment and the Continuum of Placement Options
- Access to the General Education Curriculum and Non-disabled Peers
- IEP Team Decision Making

Questions?

- Use QR Code or URL to open our Padlet
[Phttps://padlet.com/suzanneperry1/parking-lot-nzbdv6l6v9np1kpkarkingLot](https://padlet.com/suzanneperry1/parking-lot-nzbdv6l6v9np1kpkarkingLot)
- Add your questions and comments to the Padlet



Least Restrictive Environment

The LRE, or least restrictive environment requirement within IDEA states that:

- Students with disabilities receive their education alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate
- Students should not be removed from the general education classroom unless learning cannot be achieved even with the use of supplementary aids and services



Continuum of Placement Options

Least Restrictive to Most Restrictive

...must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available.



LRE, Placement, Location Examples

Discussion: Least Restrictive Environment

Application: IEP Teams have a discussion to determine what the least restrictive environment is for each individual child, based on their needs.

Decision: Placement (on the Continuum of Placement Options)

Application: A child may have significant needs, but with supports and services can be in a regular early childhood setting, or the placement may be determined to be a self-contained classroom.

Enrollment: Location of Services

Application: A child that needs a Regular Early Childhood Program might attend the SAU Public PreK program, a Head Start, a community based childcare program, a Title 1 program, a university lab school, etc.

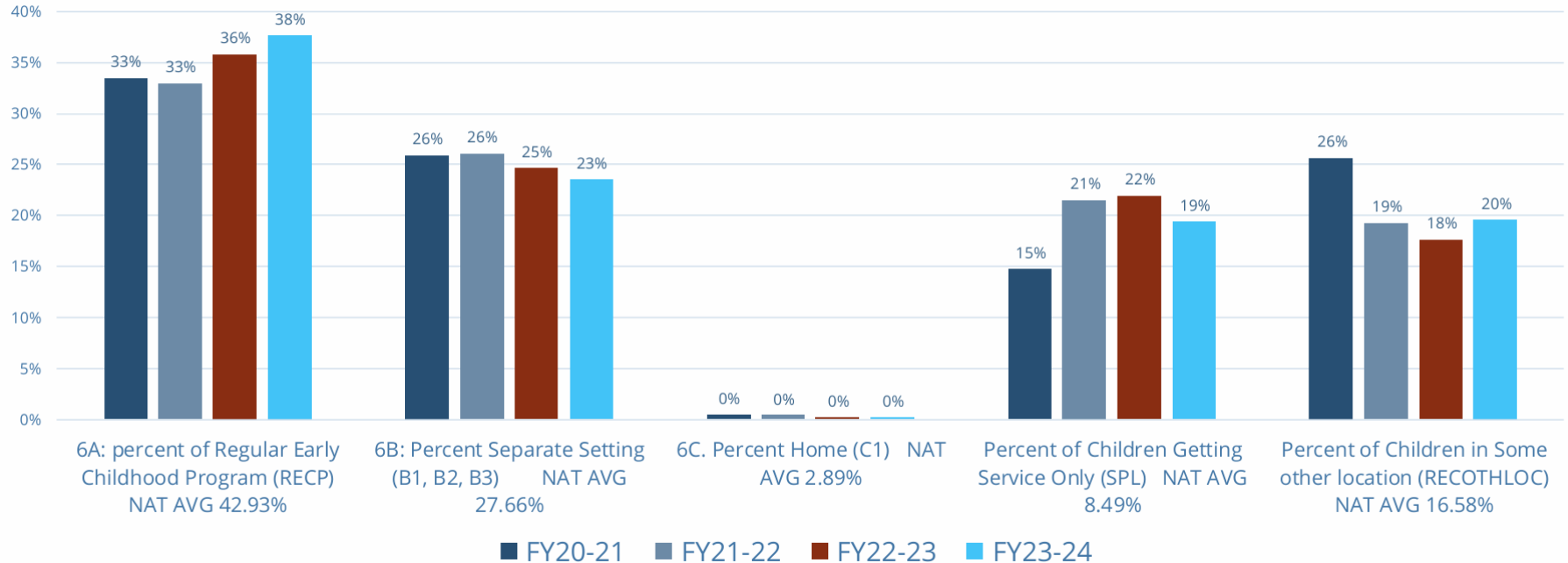
IDEA REGULATIONS

34 CFR §300.116

- Unless the IEP of a child with a disability requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school that he or she would attend if nondisabled;
- In selecting the LRE, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that he or she needs;
- A child with a disability is not removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum."

Preschool Environments Data

Least Restrictive Environment Data FFY2020-2023



Why Inclusion?

- High quality inclusive settings are the only environments with data consistently supporting children's superior learning AND non-inclusive environments have been shown to negatively impact children's learning.
- Fully inclusive options beat the alternative at a ratio of about 15 studies to 1.
- Fully inclusive options have been shown to work for children across disability groups and levels of severity (children with developmental delays, mild to severe; children with ASD; children with multiple disabilities; children with significant social and emotional needs; children with hearing impairment; children with limited mobility).





Inclusive Supports

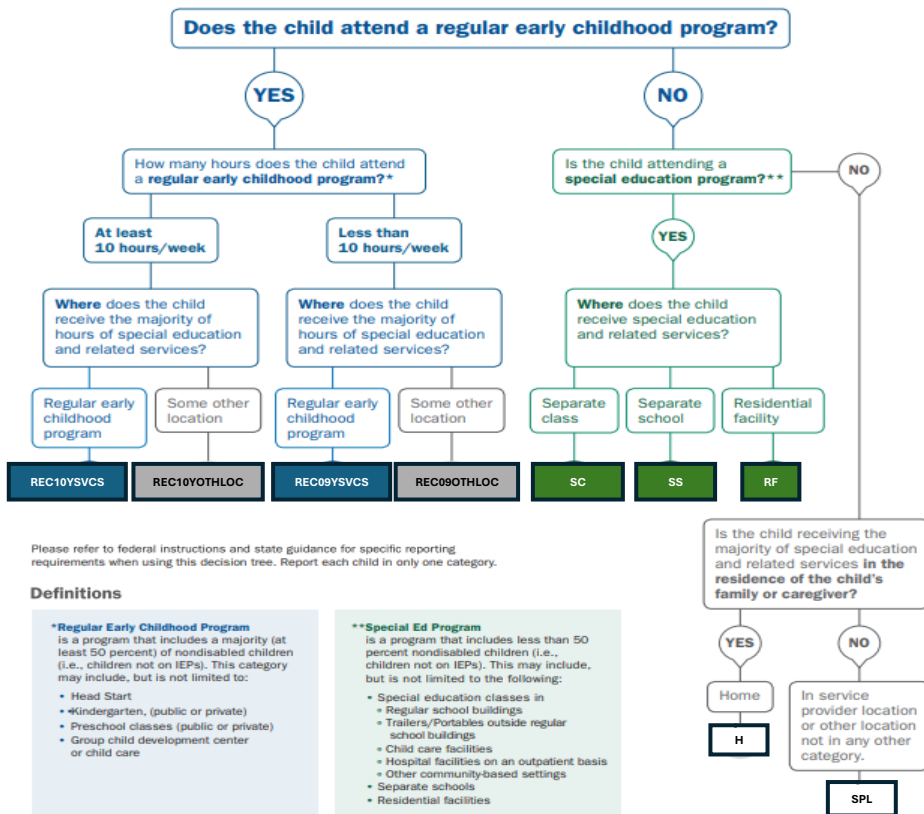


- Based on the video, what category of LRE would this be?
- What supports did you notice were successful for the child?
- What actions did the adults need to take?
- What do you imagine some of the IEP team conversations were that led to this choice on the continuum of placement options?

LRE Category Names and Labels

Regular early childhood program with access to typical peers
Separate programs for gen ed and spec ed, some access to typical peers
Separate program, little to no access to typical peers
Separate program, no participation with typical peers

Decision Tree for Reporting Educational Environments for Children Ages 3-5 with IEPs



Special Education IEP Process (Overview)



child's current
academic and
functional
performance



goals that will
enable the child
to make
progress



supports and
services the
child will need



select the LRE,
starting with the
least restrictive



Present Level Questions



- A. What are the child's developmental strengths and abilities?
- B. Where is the child now?
- C. Has the child experienced success in his/her current or previous placements?
- D. Has the child experienced challenges?
- E. Is the child in a location with children his or her age? With typically developing children?
- F. What behaviors/skills are considered developmentally appropriate for this child?
- G. Does the child have any specific behavioral concerns?
- H. What opportunities has the child had to interact with typically developing peers that the family felt was important (e.g., church programs, community classes, etc).

IEP Team Lists Needed Services

Section 6: SUPPLEMENTARY AIDS, SERVICES, MODIFICATIONS AND/OR SUPPORTS

In addition to ongoing classroom supports and services, supplemental aids, and modifications, include a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on State and district-wide and classroom assessments (MUSER IX.3.A.(1)(f)(i)).

A. Supplementary aids, modifications, accommodations, services, and/or supports for SAU personnel	Location	Frequency	Duration Beginning/End Date
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Instruction			
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Assessment			
<input type="checkbox"/> District-wide Assessment			
<input type="checkbox"/> State Assessment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Instruction			
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Assessment			
<input type="checkbox"/> District-wide Assessment			
<input type="checkbox"/> State Assessment			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other			

Section 7: SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES

Special Education Services	Position Responsible	Location	Frequency	Duration Beginning and End Date
Specially Designed Instruction				
Speech/Language Services				
Consultation				
Tutorial Instruction				
Extended School Year				
Related Services	Position Responsible	Location	Frequency	Duration Beginning and End Date
Speech/Language Services				
Occupational Therapy				
Physical Therapy				
Social Work Services				
Nursing Services				
Transportation				
Other				

- Listen to and consider all team members when LRE options are voiced.
- Consider whether the child can be successful in the gen. ed. setting with supports and services.
- Discuss issues that might prevent the child from benefitting from a regular education classroom
- If the child cannot make progress in the regular classroom, even with services and supports, consider and discuss alternative options on the continuum.

Prepare for IEP Team Placement and Location of Service Discussion:

- Where is the child currently?
- What does the family want/need?
- What is the child's Least Restrictive Environment?
- What kinds of programs are available in the district and the community that will meet the needs and the environment chosen by the IEP team?
- What is the LRE code?
- What are the district's next steps for ensuring the child is in a program that meets the child's needs (funding, arranging services, enrollment)?

Justification Statement

IDEA regulations require the child's IEP team to include a justification statement, which documents:

"An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class..."

IDEA Regulations. 34 CFR §320(a)(5)



Resources and References

(Slide 7) Phil Strain, Ph.D., is a Professor of Educational Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Colorado Denver. Phil has worked in the field of early intervention since 1974, is the author of over 250 scientific papers and he serves on the editorial boards of over a dozen professional journals. The inclusion quotes were presented at the OSEP Leadership Conference (2019). [Phil Strain - Pyramid Model Consortium](#)

Iris Information Brief on Least Restrictive Environment. https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf_info_briefs/IRIS_least_restrictive_environment_info_brief.pdf

Principles of IDEA: LRE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFrBfdOTf7o>

Inclusive Schooling: 3 Reasons Why We Won't Be Hiring More Paraprofessionals. Krist Pretti-Frontczak and Julie Causton (2024) [3+Reasons+Paras.pdf](#)

IDEA Data Center B6 Data Reporting Tool [Educational Environments, Ages 3-5 B6 Data Reporting Tools](#)

Services and Related Services: [Progress Center Tip Sheet Program Modifications & Supports for School Personnel](#)

(Slide 14) IDEA Regulations for Services and Related Services (§300.320(a)(4),(5),(7); A.A.C. R7-2-401(F)(4)) *Supplementary Aids and Services, Program Modifications, and Supports for School Personnel (§300.324.(a)(4)(a)(3)(ii))*

Further Learning on LRE and Inclusion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFrBfdOTf7o> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2wJqDw9B68>



Thank You!

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