

4 Ways to Use Least Restrictive Environment in Special Education, to Benefit Your Child

Do you have a child with autism, or a learning disability that is in a regular

classroom? Do you have a child with another disability that is in a self contained classroom, and you would like them to receive some mainstreaming?

This article will discuss the individuals with disabilities education act (IDEA) requirements, for least restrictive environment (LRE), and how you can use them to benefit your child's education.

IDEA states: To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities . . . are educated with children who are non disabled. What this means is that children with disabilities, have the right to be educated with children without disabilities.

IDEA also states: Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

IDEA requires a continuum of placement options. These options start in the regular classroom go to a special class, special school, hospital program etc.

Ways to use LRE to help your child:

1. Use the requirements of LRE, to gain access for your child to the regular classroom curriculum. Many studies have shown that children with disabilities that have access to the regular education curriculum, do better in their education. LRE requires that placement option discussions need to start at the regular classroom, and then become more restrictive, as the child's disability warrants.
2. If your child requires a self contained placement, use the requirements of LRE to help them receive mainstreaming. When a child is young 5-9 years, there are a lot of opportunities for interaction with non disabled children. Lunch, recess, arts and crafts, music, special parties or projects. Children with behavioral issues can learn appropriate behavior by having contact with non disabled children.
3. Use the LRE requirements of IDEA to get your child a placement other than the regular classroom, if their educational needs require it. Many school districts only offer an inclusive (regular education) placement; which they are not allowed to do under the continuum of placement options in IDEA.
4. Use the LRE requirements of IDEA to get your child supplementary aids and services that will help your child succeed in the regular classroom. These aids and services can be anything that your child needs in order to benefit from a regular classroom placement. For Example: A classroom aide, an individual aide, shorter assignments, tape recorder, modified curriculum, modified or shorter tests, ability to take tests verbally, etc. The list is endless, just depends on your child's educational needs.

By knowing the least restrictive environment requirements, you will be able to successfully advocate for the placement that will meet your child's educational needs. Remember that LRE is different for each child, depending on their disability and needs.

About the Author

JoAnn Collins is the mother of two adults with disabilities. She has helped parents navigate the special education system for over 15 years. Her book Disability Deception; Lies Disability Educators Tell and How Parents Can Beat Them at Their Own Game is filled with advocacy tips and resources to help parents. To sign up for a wonderful E newsletter, send an E mail to: JoAnn@disabilitydeception.com. For a link to more free articles, go to: www.disabilitydeception.com.

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