

Specialized Learning

MONTHLY

Issue 004

January 11, 2024

Least Restrictive Environment: Why It Matters

Least restrictive environment (LRE) is an often misunderstood aspect of special education regulation. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education students should spend as much time as possible learning in classrooms with students who do not receive special education services. The law states that a student should only be removed from a regular classroom setting if the impact of his/her disability makes learning in the classroom (even with accommodations, supports, and/or aides) “unsatisfactory.” The tough part is that LRE is not a place, but a guiding principle for how students receive their education. In this issue, we will outline some key ideas related to determining LRE for a student with special needs.



Please feel free to contact me with any questions!
April Lomas - april.lomas@mot.k12.de.us



Important to Note

- Least Restrictive Environments (LREs) can be viewed as a continuum to help guide decisions. (See visual on next page.)
- Aside from the “place” provided on the continuum, there are multiple ways that schools can adjust LRE through supports and services provided in the setting.
- Decisions about LREs should be made on an individualized basis. A student’s disability classification should NOT define their LRE.

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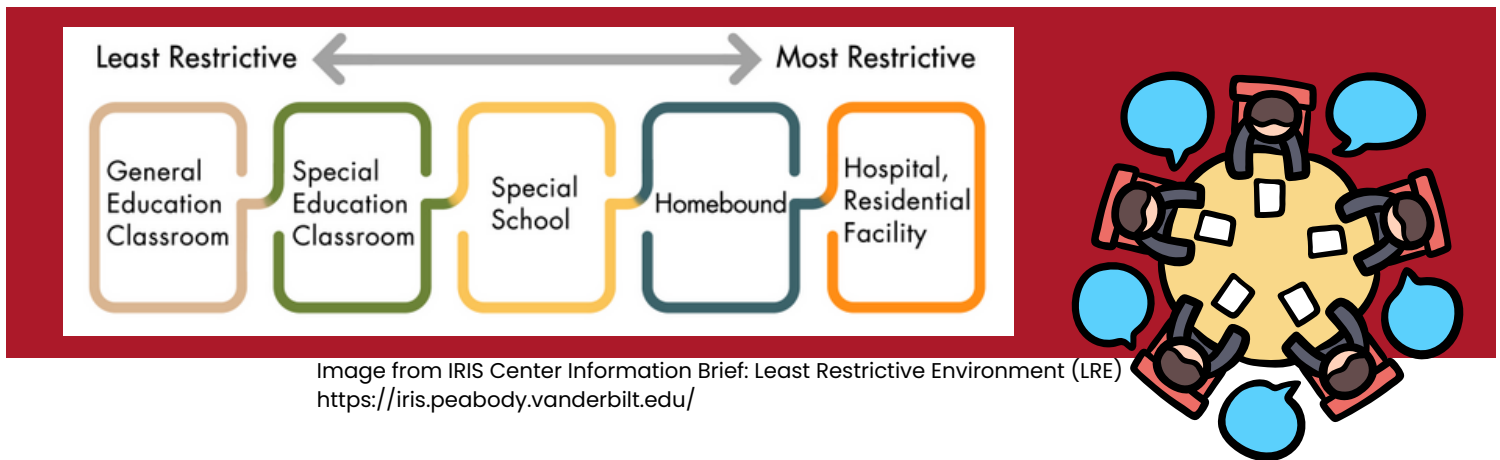


Image from IRIS Center Information Brief: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>

How is LRE determined??

The decision about the most appropriate least restrictive environment (LRE) for a student should be made by the IEP team at an IEP meeting. The team should first look at the student's ability to find success in the general education classroom. Remember, our goal is to support all students in accessing and learning from the general education curriculum. The team should consider observational, numerical, and other qualitative data to consider other placements on the LRE continuum. At MOT Charter, per best practice, we focus on the whole child and weigh the challenges and benefits of different LREs for students. The team should consider not only academic success, but also social, emotional, and behavioral growth, as well.



Additional Resources

- [Placement, Short-and-Sweet](#) - A parent-friendly overview of LRE
- [Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\): What parents need to know](#) - More information about LRE (a bit more technical language)

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Staff Spotlight

Mrs. Swalm is our 6th-grade math and language arts inclusion teacher. She has spent her last 10 years at MOT Charter, but has a total of 35 years in education! Mrs. Swalm earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Delaware and went on to earn her graduate degree at Wilmington University. She has taught in grades 5-12 in various subjects including Spanish, math, and Bible. Mrs. Swalm was a principal for 7 years. In her free time, Mrs. Swalm loves going to the beach, playing pickleball, roller skating/blading, and spending time with her grandkids. Go Team Swalm!!



Cathy Swalm



Sharan Duren

Ms. Duren is in her 16th year at MOT Charter as our middle school special education teacher. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Delaware and worked in restaurant and retail management before getting her master's degree from Wilmington University. Ms. Duren also tutors students after school and during the summer. Ms. Duren has two adult children and two rescue dogs that she adores. She enjoys cooking and listening to music. Ms. Duren is a huge Philly sports fan - Go Phillies and Go Birds!!