

Special Education Process: Least Restrictive Environment(LRE)

Principal's Academy

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Dr. Carrie Page and Dr. Emily Meuth
Special Education Coordinators,
Rockwood/Kirkwood

Alan Wheat
Executive Director of Student Services





#Welcome

AGENDA

- Session Outcomes
- Special Education Laws and Regulations: Laying the Foundation
- Standards & Indicators: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- LRE and FAPE
- Scenarios/Reflection
- Resources

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Session Outcomes

Participants will:

- Identify big ideas relating to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Recognize the critical role of general education as well as special education staff in the special education process
- Identify resources to access additional information



Follow Along

<https://tinyurl.com/LRE-Principal-Academy>



Reference to SPED Law



Missouri State Plan for Special Education, Part B 2021

6 Guiding Principles of IDEA

Complete, individualized education: Must be comprehensive enough to identify all of the student's relevant academic and functional needs in order to guide instructional decisions

Free appropriate public education (FAPE): students with disabilities are entitled to FAPE that is individualized to their unique needs and conform with the IEP

Individualized education program (IEP): The blueprint of the student's FAPE

Least restrictive environment (LRE): FAPE must be provided alongside peers without disabilities in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible. Removal should only occur when the nature or severity of the disability is such that FAPE cannot be satisfactorily achieved in that setting—even with supplementary aids and services

Parent participation: Most basic of IDEA requirements. Parents are full and equal participants on the IEP team.

Procedural safeguards: Parents have rights related to written consent, IEEs, access to educational records, dispute resolution, and explanation of these rights.

Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District (2017)

Overview of the Decision:

- FAPE Standard: Schools must provide more than minimal benefits; education must enable appropriate progress.
- IEP Requirements: IEPs should be ambitious and tailored to the child's unique needs, promoting academic and functional progress.
- Parental Involvement: Parents must be involved in the IEP process and have the right to challenge the adequacy of the education provided.
- Progress Measurement: Clear and rigorous methods to measure the child's progress are required to ensure the educational plan's effectiveness.

Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District (2017)

Implications of Andrew F. Decision:

- Individualized Approach: Takes into account the child's disabilities and cultural background.
- Equity and Access: Ensures quality education for students from diverse cultural backgrounds, addressing potential biases.
- **Inclusive Practices: Advocates for settings where students with disabilities learn alongside their peers, respecting cultural identities.**
- Family Engagement: Mandates parental involvement in IEP development, valuing the family's cultural perspectives.
- Professional Development: Educators must be trained in legal requirements and culturally responsive teaching methods to meet diverse needs effectively.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

An underlying principle of IDEA is that students with disabilities have a right to be educated in the environment that affords them maximum exposure to nondisabled peers.

"(2) Each [public agency](#) must ensure that -

- (i) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and
- (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily". (34 CFR Sec 300.114)

FAPE and LRE

Our obligations to provide FAPE and placement in the LRE exist simultaneously, but the provision of FAPE prevails when there is a dispute.

- Determination of appropriate educational services must come first
- Once an appropriate level of service is determined, the IEP team should consider placement in an environment that provides maximum exposure to nondisabled peers, and in the school they would attend if nondisabled.
- Our first consideration should be the general education classroom with appropriate supplementary aids and services. When this option has been exhausted, other placements on the continuum can be considered.
- Inclusion opportunities may not be appropriate for all students. Each students' unique needs must be considered individually
- When issues of FAPE and LRE are conflict, the right to FAPE takes precedence

Evaluate and identify individual student needs

Identify goals

For each goal, identify services and supports

Determine placement to address each goal

Can the student be successful with special education and related services delivered in this setting, with accommodations or modifications as needed?

Yes

Placement:
General Education
Classroom

No

Moving along the continuum of alternative placements, consider...

Can the student be successful with special education and related services delivered in this setting, with accommodations or modifications as needed?

Yes

Placement:
Special Education
Classroom

No

Continue through the continuum of alternative placements, one at a time, repeating the question until a "yes" answer is obtained.

LRE Guiding Questions: [DESE Sample IEP Placement Page](#)

For K-12: The regular education environment **includes all academic instruction as well as meals, recess, assemblies, field trips, etc.** Will this child participate 100% of the time with non-disabled peers in the regular education environment?

Yes.

No. If no:

a. To what extent will the child not participate in a regular education environment? (minutes or percent of special education and related service minutes on the IEP in special education settings) _____

b. Describe the reasons why the IEP team determined that provision of services in the regular education environment was not appropriate for the child. Check and describe all that apply for this child:

The curriculum and goals of the regular education class (i.e., factors which document a need for specially designed materials, supplies or equipment or significant modifications to the regular curriculum which would have an adverse effect on the educational program for other students in the class). Describe: _____

The sufficiency of the district's efforts to accommodate the child with a disability in the regular class (i.e., description of modifications which have been attempted/resources which have been committed and the student centered results which were observed or a description of the modifications considered but rejected and the basis for the rejection).

Describe: _____

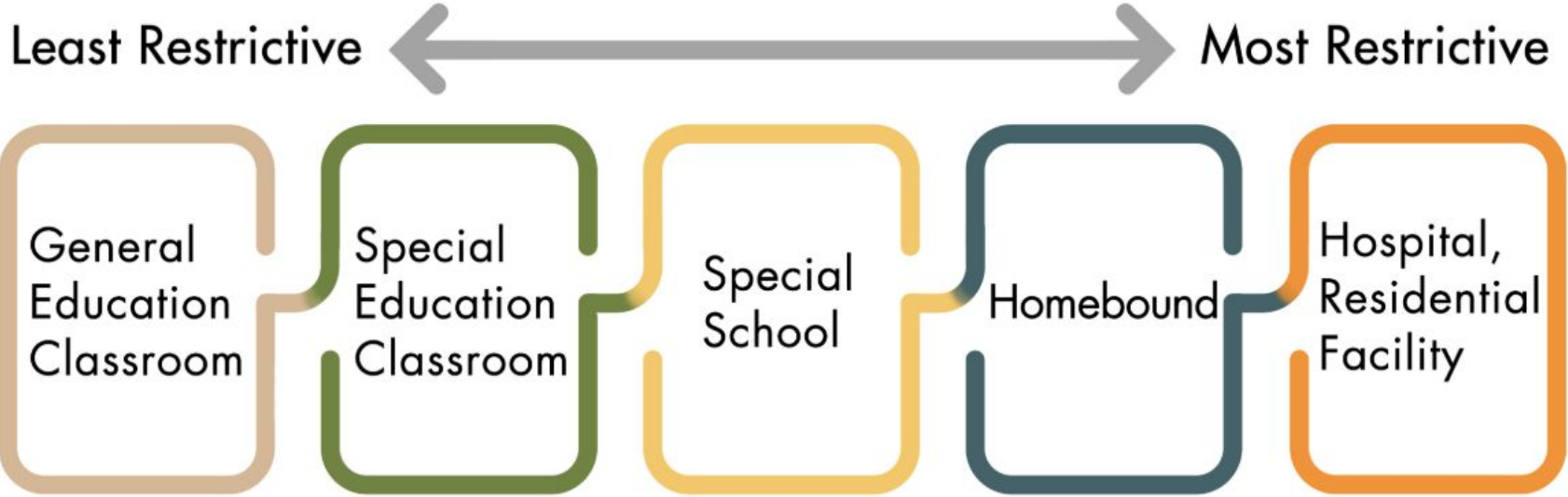
The degree to which the child with a disability will receive educational benefit from regular education (i.e., consideration of the potential positive effects with respect to cognitive, academic, physical, social or other areas of development). Describe: _____

The effect the presence of a child with a disability may have on the regular classroom environment and on the education that the other students are receiving (i.e., description of potential harmful effects for the student with a disability or disruptive effects for students without disabilities.)

Describe: _____

The nature and severity of the child's disability (i.e., factors which support a need for alternative instruction which cannot be achieved in the regular class such as extreme distractibility, diverse learning styles and inability to engage appropriately with other students in academic or social interactions). Describe: _____

LRE and Placement



Indicator 200.1030- Placement

- Placement decisions are based on the child's IEP
- Placement decisions are made only after the development or revisions of the IEP
- Placement decisions are based upon **LRE**
- The child's IEP team makes placement decisions
- Placement is determined annually

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Indicator 200.1030- Placement

- Placement is based upon the services identified in the child's IEP
- Placement is as close as possible to the child's home and in the school he/she would attend if non disabled unless the IEP requires some other arrangements
- A continuum of alternative placement options is available
- Child is not removed from education in age-appropriate regular classroom solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum

Scenarios

1. Read the Scenario
2. Review Discussion Points with Partner
3. Determine students most appropriate LRE and why
4. Share out with group

Scenario #1

Background

- **Student:** Ethan
- **Disability:** Severe emotional and behavioral disorders, including frequent aggressive outbursts, self-harm, and oppositional defiant behaviors
- **Current Placement:** Self-contained special education classroom within a public school

Ethan's current supports include:

- A behavior intervention plan (BIP) with specific strategies for de-escalation
- One-on-one paraprofessional support
- Counseling and social skills training
- Collaboration with a behavior specialist

IEP Goals

Stabilize emotional and behavioral responses

- Develop coping strategies and self-regulation skills
- Progress in academic skills appropriate to his cognitive abilities

Despite these interventions, Ethan's behaviors have escalated, leading to frequent crisis situations. His educational team, in consultation with his parents and medical professionals, is considering a more restrictive environment that can provide the level of support he needs.

Questions and Discussion Points for Scenario #1

Discussion Points:

Intensity of Supports Needed

Safety and Stability

Collaboration with Professionals (mental health professionals, medical doctors, parents, counselors, teachers).

Questions to Answer:

What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Ethan?

How can FAPE be ensured in a more restrictive setting?

- What specific therapeutic and educational supports will be implemented to help Ethan achieve his IEP goals?
- How will the specialized setting provide a structured environment conducive to his learning and emotional stability?

What opportunities for reintegration exist?*

- What criteria will be used to determine when Ethan might be ready to transition back to a less restrictive environment?
- How will progress be monitored, and what supports will be in place to facilitate a successful reintegration?

Scenario #2

Background

Background:**

- **Student:** Aiden
- **Disability:** Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in mathematics, particularly in areas of calculation and problem-solving
- **Current Placement:** General education classroom with accommodations

Aiden has been in the general education classroom with various accommodations for math, such as:

- Extended time on assignments and tests
- Use of a calculator for complex calculations
- Visual aids and manipulatives

IEP Goals

- Improve math calculation and problem-solving skills to grade level within one year
- Develop strategies for approaching math tasks independently

Despite these supports, Aiden's progress in math has been limited. His teacher has noticed that he often requires one-on-one assistance to understand new concepts and complete assignments. His frustration is impacting his overall attitude toward school.

Questions and Discussion Points for Scenario #2

Discussion Points:

Academic and Emotional Needs

Balance of Environments

Collaborative Approach:

Questions to Answer:

What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Aiden?

How can FAPE be ensured with resource level supports?*

- What specific instructional strategies and supports will be implemented in the resource room or through co-teaching to help Aiden achieve his IEP goals?

What indicators will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of resource level supports?*

- How will Aiden's progress in math be monitored to ensure that the resource level supports are meeting his needs?

Scenario #3

Background

Student:** Mia

- **Disability:** Multiple disabilities including intellectual disability, speech impairment, and physical disabilities affecting mobility and fine motor skills
- **Current Placement:** General education classroom with full-time paraprofessional support and numerous pull-out services

- Full-time paraprofessional assistance
- Pull-out services for speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy
- Adapted materials and modified curriculum

IEP Goals

- Develop basic academic skills in reading, writing, and math
- Improve communication skills using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices
- Enhance daily living skills and independence

Mia is struggling to keep up with her peers and is not making adequate progress on her IEP goals. Her teachers have noted that she often appears frustrated and disengaged. The IEP team is considering a more specialized setting that can better meet Mia's complex needs.

Questions and Discussion Points for Scenario #3

Discussion Points:

- Intensity of Needs: Consider the intensity and type of support Mia requires to make progress on her IEP goals.
- Structured Environment: Evaluate the benefits of a structured, smaller classroom environment where Mia can receive more individualized attention and support.
- **Social Interactions:**

Questions to Answer:

What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Mia?

How can FAPE be ensured in a self-contained classroom?**

- What specific instructional strategies and supports will be implemented in the self-contained classroom to help Mia achieve her IEP goals?

What opportunities for inclusion can be provided?**

- How can Mia be included in general education activities to the maximum extent appropriate, such as during non-academic times like lunch, recess, and special school events?

Scenario #4

Background

*Student:** Lily

- **Disability:** Mild Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) affecting social skills and communication
- **Current Placement:** General education classroom with some supports (e.g., speech therapy, social skills training)

-Lily has been in a general education classroom since kindergarten. Her teachers have noted that she excels academically but sometimes isolates herself during group activities and struggles with unstructured social situations. She has received:

- Weekly speech therapy focusing on pragmatic language skills
- Social skills training sessions with the school counselor
- Preferential seating and visual schedules to help with transitions

IEP Goals

- Improve social interaction and communication skills
- Participate fully in the general education curriculum with minimal support

Despite these challenges, Lily thrives in the general education setting and shows significant progress in both academic and social areas. Her parents and teachers believe that with the right supports, she can continue to succeed in this environment.

Questions and Discussion Points for Scenario #4

Discussion Points:

- **Inclusion Benefits:**** Consider the benefits of Lily being included in the general education setting for both her academic and social development.
- ****Targeted Supports:**** Determine the targeted supports and accommodations that will help Lily succeed in this environment.
- ****Collaboration:**** Ensure ongoing collaboration between general education teachers, special education staff, and Lily's family to monitor her progress and adjust supports as needed.
- ****Flexibility:**** Be prepared to adjust the level of support as Lily progresses, ensuring that she continues to receive FAPE in the LRE.

Questions to Answer:

- **What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Lily?***
 - Considering Lily's academic strengths and her social challenges, is the general education classroom with supports the most appropriate placement?
- **How can FAPE be ensured in the general education setting?***
 - What specific supports and accommodations are necessary for Lily to access and benefit from the general education curriculum?
- **What progress monitoring is needed?***
 - How will Lily's social and academic progress be monitored to ensure that she continues to thrive in the general education setting?

Scenario #5

Background

Student:** James

- **Disability:** Chronic illness (e.g., severe immune deficiency, cancer treatment) requiring prolonged absence from school
- **Current Placement:** General education classroom, but with increasing absences due to medical treatments and recovery periods

James' current supports include:

- Modified assignments and extended deadlines to accommodate absences
- Homebound instruction provided by a visiting teacher during periods when he cannot attend school
- Virtual participation in class activities when possible

IEP Goals

Maintain academic progress in core subjects

- Ensure continuity of education during prolonged absences
- Support social and emotional well-being during homebound instruction

Despite these accommodations, James is falling behind academically and is becoming socially isolated.

Questions and Discussion Points for Scenario #5

Discussion Points:

Health and Safety:* Evaluate the necessity of homebound instruction due to James' medical condition and ensure that his health and safety are prioritized.

- ****Academic Continuity:**** Consider how homebound instruction can provide continuity in James' education and prevent him from falling behind.

- ****Holistic Support:**** Plan for a comprehensive approach that addresses James' academic, social, and emotional needs while he receives homebound instruction.

Questions to Answer:

1. ****What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for James?**

2. ****How can FAPE be ensured through homebound instruction?**

- What specific instructional strategies and supports will be implemented to help James achieve his IEP goals during homebound instruction?

- How will James' academic progress be monitored and maintained?

3. ****How can social and emotional needs be addressed?**

Scenario #6

Background

Student:** Olivia

- **Disability:** Severe medical condition (e.g., cystic fibrosis, severe epilepsy) requiring frequent medical interventions and monitoring
- **Current Placement:** General education classroom with a full-time nurse and various medical supports

Olivia's current supports include:

- A full-time nurse who administers medications and monitors her condition
- Accommodations such as extended time for assignments and tests due to frequent medical absences
- Modified physical education activities to accommodate her physical limitations

IEP Goals

Maintain academic progress in line with grade-level standards

- Develop self-management skills for her medical condition
- Ensure safe participation in school activities

Despite these supports, Olivia's condition has led to increased medical crises during school hours, necessitating frequent emergency interventions. Her parents, teachers, and medical team are considering a more specialized environment to better meet her complex medical and educational needs.

Questions and Discussion Points for Scenario #6

Discussion Points:

Medical Safety:** Evaluate the necessity of continuous medical supervision and the ability of the specialized setting to meet these needs.

- **Academic Continuity:** Consider how the specialized environment can ensure Olivia's academic progress despite frequent medical interventions and absences.
- **Individualized Support:** Plan for individualized supports and accommodations tailored to Olivia's medical and educational needs.

Questions to Answer:

What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Olivia?

How can FAPE be ensured in a more specialized setting?**

- What specific educational and medical supports will be implemented to help Olivia achieve her IEP goals in this setting?
- How will the specialized environment provide a balance between her medical needs and academic progress?

What are the indicators of progress and readiness for reintegration?**

- How will Olivia's academic and medical progress be monitored to ensure that the setting remains appropriate?
- What criteria will be used to determine if and when Olivia might transition back to a less restrictive environment?

LRE in St. Louis County - LRE1 (80% or more in General Education)

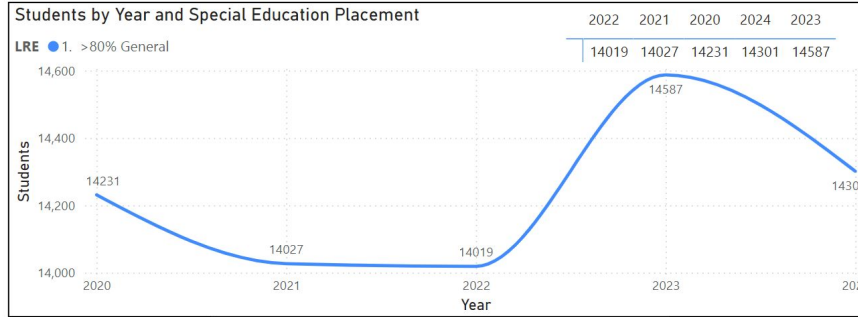


Multiple Districts
Multiple Schools

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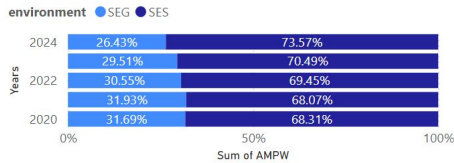
PrimaryDis
All

- Year
- 2020
 - 2021
 - 2022
 - 2023
 - 2024

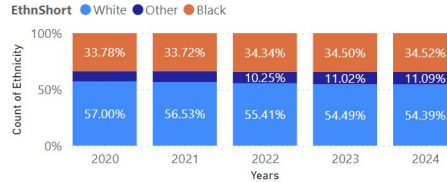


Year	1. >80% General
2020	100.00%
2021	100.00%
2022	100.00%
2023	100.00%
2024	100.00%

Percent of services by Environment



Percent of services by Environment



- LRE
- 1. >80% General
 - 2. Bet 40 & 79% General
 - 3. <40% General



LRE in St. Louis County - LRE2 (>40% and < 80% in General Education)

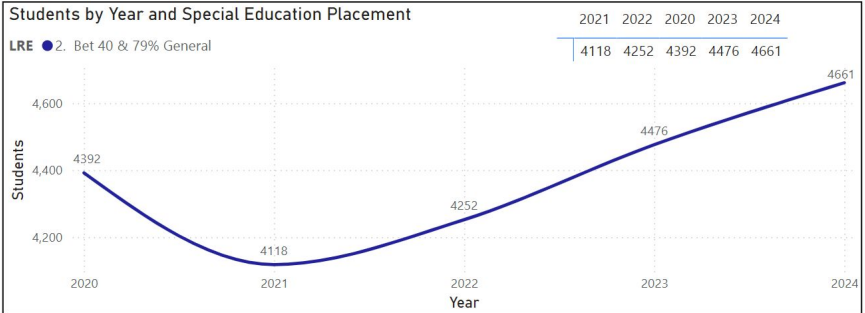


Multiple Districts
Multiple Schools

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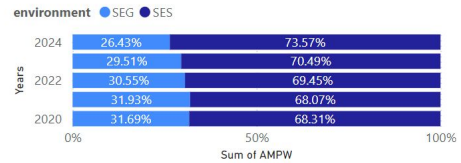
PrimaryDis
All

Year
 2020
 2021
 2022
 2023
 2024

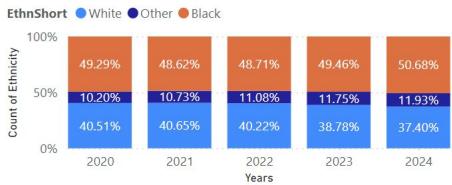


Year	2. Bet 40 & 79% General
2020	100.00%
2021	100.00%
2022	100.00%
2023	100.00%
2024	100.00%

Percent of services by Environment



Percent of services by Environment



LRE
 1. >80% General
 2. Bet 40 & 79% General
 3. <40% General



LRE in St. Louis County - LRE3 (<40% in General Education)

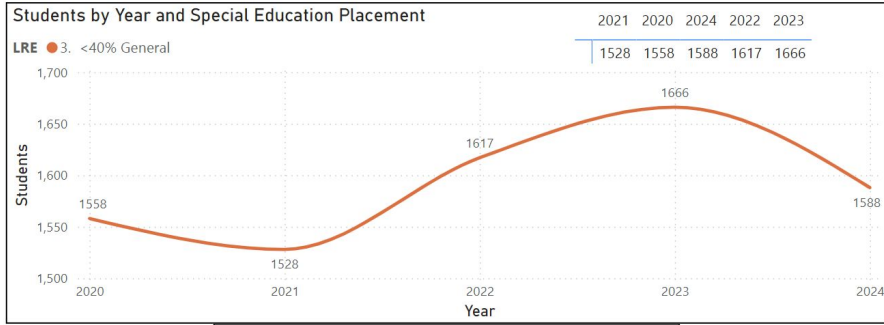


Multiple Districts
Multiple Schools

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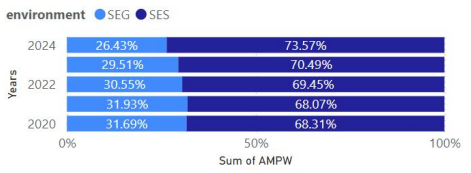
- Year
- 2020
 - 2021
 - 2022
 - 2023
 - 2024

PrimaryDis
All

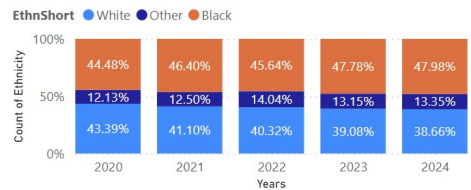


Year	3. <40% General
2020	100.00%
2021	100.00%
2022	100.00%
2023	100.00%
2024	100.00%

Percent of services by Environment



Percent of services by Environment



LRE

- 1. >80% General
- 2. Bet 40 & 79% General
- 3. <40% General



Organize and Integrate: Reflection

Reflection

In your role, how might you use this information to advocate for FAPE and LRE for your students?

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Questions?

Resources

[About IDEA](#)

[US Department of Education- Laws and Guidance](#)

[MO State Plan for Special Education](#)

[MO DESE Standards and Indicators- Special Education Process](#)

[DESE Sample IEP Placement Page](#)

[Iris Peabody LRE Resource](#)

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THANK YOU

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