



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: May 6, 2026
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: District Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, Administrators, District Supervisors of Special Education, All District Principals, Assistant/Vice Principals, Child Study Teams
From: Kimberly A. Murray, Ed.D., Acting Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Services
Deadline: June 3, 2026

Invitation to Participate in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Action Learning Group, Cohort 2 for the 2026-2027 School Year

Building on the first cohort's success, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is announcing the expansion of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Action Learning Group with Cohort 2 for 2026–2027.

This professional learning initiative focused on continuous improvement helps local education agency's (LEAs) leadership teams move beyond compliance data on LRE placement to examine actual district practices, including instructional methods, school culture, and decision-making, for better understanding of local data. Through this process, teams identify where certain groups of students with disabilities may not be experiencing the same level of success or inclusion as others and collaboratively develop a practical, team-based plan to make meaningful and lasting improvements.

Background

Placement of students with disabilities in the LRE is a foundational principle of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Following the release of the [Educational Environment Dashboard](#), the Office of Special Education (OSE) continues to build capacity throughout the state by enabling LEAs to closely review and explore their data, offering valuable insights into the inclusion of students with disabilities in the LRE, as required by 20 U.S.C. §1412(a)(5)(A).

About the LRE Action Learning Group

The LRE Action Learning Group is a six-session, team-based professional learning cohort spanning the academic year. Sessions will consist of a hybrid of in-person and virtual learning opportunities offered at both the Learning Resource Center – Central (Trenton, NJ) and the Learning Resource Center – North Satellite (Wayne, NJ).

Participating district teams will determine their own focus and plans to improve LRE policies, practices, and procedures, while the Action Learning Group provides the structure, facilitation, consultation, and embedded coaching to support that process. The work is built on the following pillars:

- Individual exploration of local LRE data;
- Engagement across general education and special education, grounded in shared ownership of student outcomes;
- A team-based approach that builds internal capacity for sustained improvement;
- Integration of both qualitative data and quantitative data;
- A locally determined plan for improvement, built and individualized by each team, aligned to their district's needs, and centered on the students served;
- Embedded consultation, coaching, and technical assistance throughout all six sessions; and,
- Cross-district collaboration and peer learning across participating LEAs.

Information Session (Required for Interested Applicants)

Attendance at the upcoming information session is required for at least one (1) member of an LEA’s leadership team who is interested in applying to participate in Cohort 2. This session is designed for Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Directors of Special Education, and other leaders who would serve as the primary team lead or champion for the work. Registration details are in the table below.

During the information session, participants will receive a full overview of:

- Participation requirements, structure, and time commitments across six sessions;
- The benefits and impact of the Action Learning Group model, grounded in Implementation Science and Improvement Science;
- The scope of the work — qualitative and quantitative data exploration, team development, and building a locally driven plan for improvement; and,
- How to apply for Cohort 2 of the 2026–2027 LRE Action Learning Group.

Session Details	Date/Time	Format	Registration Link
LRE Action Learning Group General Information Session	Date: June 3, 2026 Time: 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.	Microsoft Teams (Virtual)	Register online

Contact Information

For additional information or assistance, please email OSEInfo@doe.nj.gov.

For additional resources on educating and supporting students with disabilities, please visit the [NJDOE Office of Special Education](#), the [Learning Resource Center Network](#), and for continued engagement activities, be sure to regularly check the [Office of Special Education Engagement](#) website.

