



Data Exploration Guide:



Improving Educational Environment Rates

for Families of Middle & High School Students

WHAT IS THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DATA DASHBOARD?

This online tool shows information about where students with disabilities receive their education – in general education classrooms, resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, or specialized schools. It helps families understand how their school compares to others.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is a cornerstone of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and is closely tied to the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

This federal special education law affirms the civil rights of students with disabilities by emphasizing that they should be educated alongside their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. The principle of LRE is about ensuring that students with disabilities have access to an inclusive learning environment while still receiving the individualized supports and services they need to succeed.

WHY EXAMINE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT (LRE) DATA?

Educational environment data reflect the number of students with disabilities, ages 3 to 21, placed in general education settings to varying degrees throughout the school day. This tool compares educational environment data at the national, state and local levels. While special education is a service—not a place—and LRE decisions are based on individual student needs, this data emphasizes the importance of promoting a full continuum of placement options, meaningful inclusive opportunities, and appropriate supplementary aids and services.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER FOR YOUR CHILD?

- Access to general education is linked to better post-school outcomes.
- Inclusion provides important social opportunities and peer connections.
- College and career preparation should occur regardless of educational environment.
- Real-world preparation requires experiences with diverse peers.
- Students have the right to access transition services and activities (e.g., job sampling).

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Is my student gaining access to the courses they need for their post-school goals?

What accommodations and modifications are available in general education classes?

How does my school support inclusion during elective courses and extracurricular activities?

If my student is in a specialized program, what inclusion opportunities exist?

How are transition planning services supporting movement to less restrictive environments?

How is my child's participation during IEP meetings supported?

What factors influence my child's academic performance and placement decisions (e.g., chronic absenteeism)? How can we intervene?

HOW FAMILIES OF MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKE ACTION



INQUIRE

Explore vocational programs and inclusive post-secondary options



COMMUNICATE

Advocate for inclusive opportunities that match your student's interests



DISCUSS

Discuss career goals and necessary courses during transition planning



PREPARE

Discuss post-high school preparation and community-based experiences



AWARE

View your district's data before Individualized Education Program (IEP) and transition planning meetings