



Data Exploration Guide:

Improving Educational Environment Rates for School Board Members



This guide helps school board members explore educational environment data to foster meaningful discussions towards increasing inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities.

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.

HOW CAN SCHOOL BOARDS USE THIS DATA?

- Review district data compared to state/national trends during board meetings.
- Set measurable goals for increasing inclusive opportunities district-wide.
- Evaluate policies to remove barriers to inclusion.
- Ensure budget allocations support inclusive education initiatives.
- Monitor access to general education and opportunities for inclusion across schools within your district.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

How does our district compare to state and national averages for inclusive placements?

Do we have disproportionate representation of any student groups in more restrictive settings?

What training do our educators receive to support inclusive practices?

How are resources allocated to support students with disabilities in general education environments?

What barriers exist in our policies that may limit inclusive opportunities?

HOW SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS CAN TAKE ACTION



POLICY REVIEW

Develop policies that prioritize inclusive practices district-wide and remove barriers to inclusion



RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Ensure funding supports appropriate supplementary aids and services in general education



ACCOUNTABILITY

Request regular updates on LRE data and progress toward measurable inclusion goals



PROMOTE LEARNING

Ensure staff understand LRE and align practices and procedures to promote meaningful access and opportunity