



Data Exploration Guide:



Improving Educational Environment Rates

For Child Study Team and Related Service Providers

This guide helps child study teams and related service providers explore educational environment data to foster meaningful discussions and maximize 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 CST AND PROVIDERS USE THIS DATA?

- Analyze caseload patterns (e.g., prevalence of students and student groups across different environments) to identify opportunities for more inclusive service delivery.
- Review district data by disability category to examine placement trends.
- Compare schools within your district to identify successful inclusion models.
- Examine transition points where inclusion rates decrease (elementary to middle/high school)
- Track outcomes for students in different placement settings.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Are we systematically considering the full range of supplementary aids and services before recommending more restrictive placements?

How can we modify our service delivery to support students in general education settings?

Are there patterns in our recommendations that suggest bias toward certain placements?

How do we ensure families understand all placement options and their implications?

How am I using progress monitoring and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) to drive discussion with the team?

Am I removing students from the LRE due to program barriers or student needs?

HOW CHILD STUDY TEAM MEMBERS AND RELATED SERVICE PROVIDERS TAKE ACTION



DATA

Create data collection systems to track student progress across different settings



CONSULTATION

Develop consultation approaches to support general education teachers



DELIVERY

Implement collaborative service delivery models (push-in vs. pull-out)



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Train on High Leverage Practices (HLPs) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)



FAMILIES AS PARTNERS

Engage with families early on in the IEP development process



COLLABORATION

Collaborate with instructional coaches to align supports with curriculum access