

Chapter 7:

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

In this chapter you will -

- discover what an educational placement is and what some of the options look like
- find out what research says about inclusive education
- learn the definition of the general education environment

Where Should Students Be Educated?

Worth a Look

34 CFR 114 (a)(2)(i) says, "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."

The decision about where the student should receive services is called the educational placement. The IEP team, which includes the parents, decides the educational placement and services for the student. This is called "placement." Decisions are made at least once a year at the IEP meeting and are based on the student's individual needs. The IDEA presumes that the first placement option considered for each child with a disability is the general education classroom in the school that the child would attend if he or she did not have a disability. The team must also consider what extra supports the student needs that will allow the child to be successful in his or her educational placement.

Examples of services that could be provided to support students are assistive technology, positive behavioral strategies, a paraprofessional, study breaks, or preferential seating. There are many kinds of services and supports that could be included in the IEP.

If the IEP team decides that a general education class on a full-time basis is not the most appropriate setting for the student, then they can consider other options like resource rooms, special classes, special schools, or home/hospital instruction. Free appropriate public education (FAPE) includes three general areas: general education, non-academic activities, and extracurricular activities. To exclude your child from any of these without following procedural safeguards would be a denial of FAPE.

- The IEP must include an explanation when the student is educated apart from other students or is separated from nondisabled students for any school-sponsored activity.
- The school must provide the student equal access to nonacademic and extracurricular services. Students with disabilities must have an equal opportunity to participate in all activities sponsored by the school (transportation, clubs, music, athletics, etc.), per the supports and accommodations specified in the IEP.

- The student should be placed in the school he or she would attend if not disabled or in an age-appropriate setting as close as possible to the student's home unless the child's needs, as determined by the IEP team, warrant placement elsewhere.

What Do Some Placement Options Look Like?

Education placement decisions are made based on student's needs and **may** include the locations identified on the following summary of common placement options:

General Education

The student receives specially designed instruction with supplementary aids and services in the general education classroom. This could include, but not be limited to, modifications to the regular curriculum, co-teaching (general education teacher and special education teacher team teaching in the same classroom), special education training for the general education teacher, accommodations, computer assisted devices, note takers, physical arrangements of the classroom, peer supports, related services provided in the general education setting, grading modifications, and/or classroom or individual aides.

Important Reminder

A student with a disability should not be removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general curriculum according to 34 CFR 116(e).

Resource Room (Separate Class)

The student receives specially designed instruction through a special education class for less than half of the school day. The student is included, to the maximum extent appropriate, in general education classes.

Self-contained Room (Separate Class)

The student receives specially designed instruction through a special education class for the majority of the school day. The student is included, with support, in general education classes, when appropriate.

Separate Day School (Special School)

The student receives specially designed instruction in a special school. The student is included in those parts of general education curriculum that are appropriate.

Residential Program (Special School)

The student receives specially designed instruction in a special school and lives on the grounds of the residential program.

Home/Hospital Program

The student, with extraordinary needs that cannot be met by public schools, receives specially designed instruction at home or in the hospital.

Additional Placement Guidance

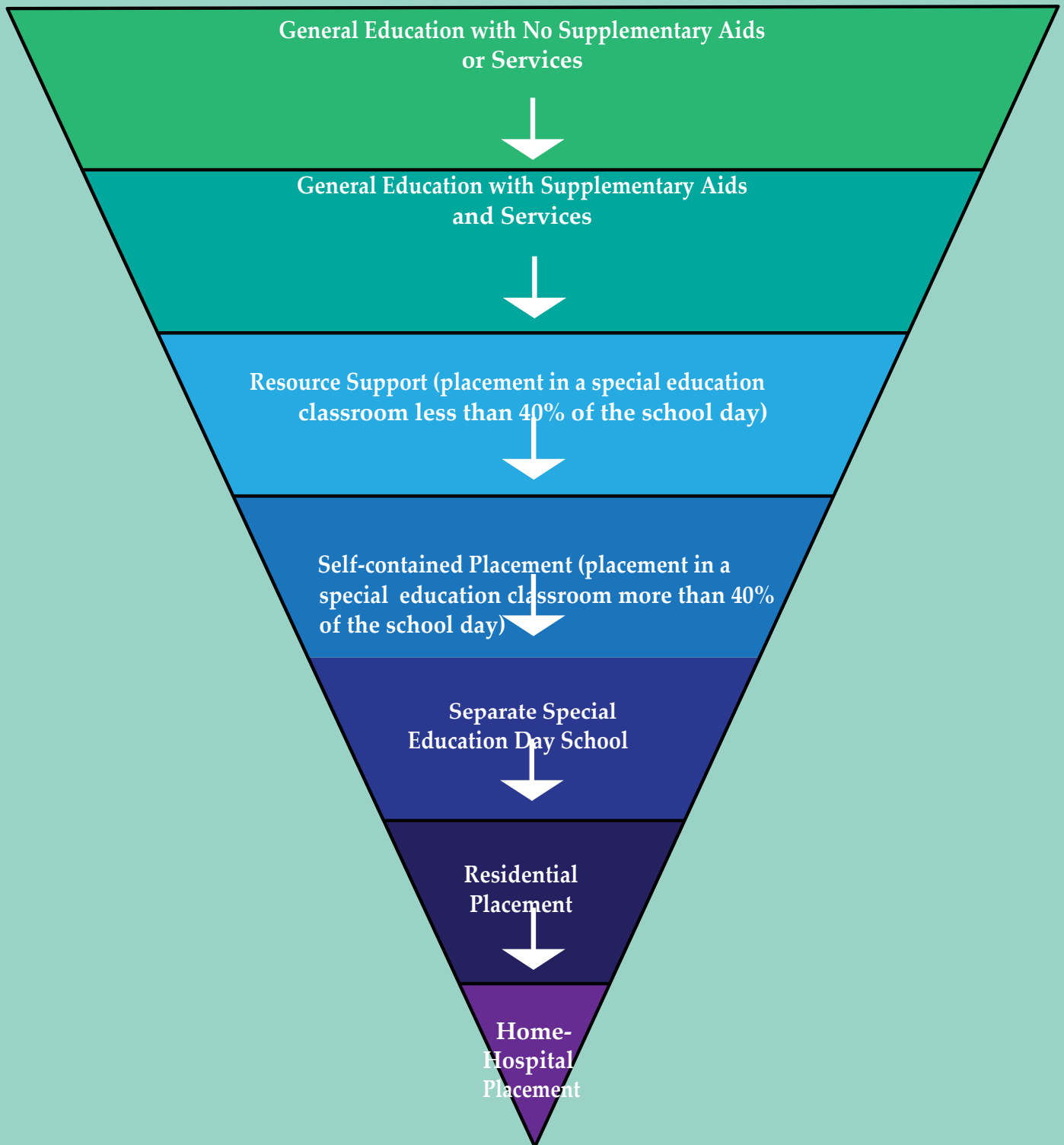
Schools may not make placement decisions based solely on factors such as the following:

- » category of disability
- » severity of disability
- » configuration of delivery system
- » availability of educational or related services
- » availability of space
- » administrative convenience

Funding concerns cannot be used as a reason for not providing appropriate programs or services. If funding is a problem, your local school district must explore other ways of serving your student.

The diagram on the next page depicts and summarizes the various placement options.

The Placement Continuum



IEP goals should be written before a decision is made on placement.

Goals should be written to support the student's needs.

They should not be written to reflect the services available in a specific placement.

Supplementary aids and services can include changes in -

- instructional strategies
- social or behavioral support
- environment
- assessment (testing)
- staff support

Instructional strategies can include -

- teaching to a student's learning style
- differentiating instruction (teaching to meet the needs of all children in the classroom)
- providing hands-on activities
- using technology to support teaching and learning
- providing one-to-one instruction

Environmental supports can include -

- assigning special seating
- providing space for movement or breaks
- helping student maintain an uncluttered space
- providing study carrels

Behavioral supports can include -

- conducting a functional behavioral analysis
- implementing a positive behavioral intervention plan
- facilitating friendships
- providing rest breaks
- providing counseling or social skills training
- modifying the environment to reduce stimuli that are known to trigger the student's behavioral problems, such as excess noise or crowded hallways

Staff supports can include -

- training
- collaboration time between general education and special education teachers
- co-taught classrooms
- use of paraprofessional staff
- assistance for the teacher with curriculum and test modifications

Assessment (testing) accommodations can include -

- reading the test to the student (except for comprehension portion)
- additional time
- fewer questions
- allowing the student to give answers orally/testing individually so they can talk through the question and answer
- highlighting key directions

What Are the Benefits of An Inclusive Education?

When children with disabilities are part of the life and activities of a school, the following benefits are realized:

- Typical peers serve as models for children with disabilities.
- Natural friendships develop within the child's home community.
- Children with disabilities learn new academic and social skills within natural environments, facilitating generalization of skills.
- All students learn to value diversity.
- General education classrooms are better able to meet the needs of all students as a result of additional instructional resources, staff development for general and special educators, a more flexible curriculum, and adapted instructional delivery systems.

There are other benefits to inclusion:

- Students without disabilities develop an appreciation and acceptance of individual differences, including their own.
- Students are better prepared for adult life in an inclusive society.
- Students without disabilities have opportunities to master activities by practicing and teaching others.
- Students also have the opportunity to participate in alternative learning experiences, such as peer tutoring, cooperative learning groups, specific strategies instruction, individual remediation, small group instruction, specific language/listening developmental activities, and differentiated instruction.
- There is increased collaboration among school staff and more opportunities for parent participation.
- A wider variety of interventions and modifications are attempted with students.
- Teaching methods, techniques, and strategies are enhanced.
- Expectations are higher for children with disabilities, and so is their achievement.

What Is the General Education Environment?

The United States Department of Education explained that the term encompasses regular classrooms and other settings in schools such as lunchrooms and playgrounds in which children without disabilities participate.

Placement is not an either/or decision, where children are either placed in a general education classroom or they're not. The intent is for services to follow or go with the child, not for the child to follow the services.

Worth a Look

The federal requirements for the Least Restrictive Environment may be found at 34 CFR 300.114.