



Educational Placement and the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Educational placement is the setting where your child receives his or her education and services. Schools must place students in the least restrictive environment (LRE). That means students must be placed in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible to receive supports and services as determined by the individualized education program team.

Students must be taught alongside their typically developing peers as much as possible.

The General Education Setting

If your child did not need special education services:

- Where would he or she go to school?
- What classes would he or she be in?
- What activities would he or she do?

These types of questions can help to identify the most appropriate education setting.

General (sometimes called regular) education settings include classrooms, lunchrooms, playgrounds, gyms, libraries, and any other location where children without disabilities are educated.

Unless otherwise noted in the IEP, this is the setting where your child should be educated.

When can a school place my child outside the general education setting?

Options like special classes or schools may only be used when your child is not able to make satisfactory progress toward his or her individualized education program (IEP) goals in the regular educational environment with supplementary aids and services.

January 2020



Other Possible Settings

Sometimes the general education setting is not an appropriate placement. Schools must offer other options outside the general education setting to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Other placements may include:

- Special classes.
- Special programs.
- Home instruction.
- Instruction in hospitals and institutions.

Many students spend most of the day in a general education setting and some of the day in an alternative setting to receive additional services. Some services or instruction (such as physical therapy or intensive instruction) may be provided inside or outside the general education classroom. An example of therapy taking place in the 3rd grade classroom is a speech therapist working with a child on language goals within a small reading group. Sometimes students may receive services outside of the general education classroom, such as occupational therapy, where special equipment is needed. The IEP team will put a plan in place to best meet the needs of your child.

Who decides where the child spends his or her time?

Where the child spends his or her time is determined by the individualized education program (IEP) team, including the parent. The group must have knowledge of the child, the evaluation data, and the options for where the child spends his or her time. This is determined at least annually and is written into the IEP.

How am I notified?

The school must inform you (provide notice) about your child's placement *before* the IEP becomes effective. The notice must include, among other things:

- Why the decision was made.
- How the child was evaluated to come to the decision.
- What other options were considered.

What if I disagree with the placement decision?

If you disagree with the placement of your child, it is important to write down your concerns and talk to your special education teacher or administrator in your building. Go to the [Michigan Alliance for Families Dispute Resolution](#) process for additional information about what to write down and who to contact.

Resources

- [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\): Least Restrictive Environment](#)
- [Department of Education: Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool Children and the Least Restrictive Environment](#)



[Michigan Alliance for Families: Least Restrictive Environment and Placement](#)