

(1.52) What does least restrictive environment (LRE) mean?

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is the requirement in federal and state law that students with disabilities receive their education, to the maximum extent appropriate, with nondisabled peers. Special education students should not be removed from regular classes unless, even with supplemental aids and services, education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The terms “mainstreaming”, “integration”, “full inclusion” and “reverse mainstreaming” do not appear in any law. These terms have been developed by educators to describe various ways of meeting the LRE requirements. As a result, different educational agencies may have somewhat different definitions of these terms.

Federal law provides that each local school district must ensure that:

“...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 not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.”

[20 U.S.C. Sec. 1412(a)(5)(A); 34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.114; Cal. Ed. Code Sec. 56342(b).]