

# What's the Big IDEA?:

## Least Restrictive Environments & Family Rights

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According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for a student who has a disability is a placement that allows the student to participate in general education classrooms with peers **whenever possible**.

- A student should only be educated in a separate classroom or school placement if the services or aids that a student requires to succeed cannot be adequately integrated into the general education classroom.

Many students may require **accommodations** in order to succeed in school. However, while the IDEA notes the importance of having services/aids available to students, it does not provide specific recommendations for each disability.

Knowledge of the individual student and their disability, as well as the use of comprehensive and reliable assessments, are important for determining what supplementary services may assist them in the classroom.

Placements and accommodations are often decided by the team members involved in a student's IEP.

**Caregivers and the student (if possible) should be included in the process of identifying an appropriate placement and deciding what accommodations are needed. This often takes place during an IEP meeting.**

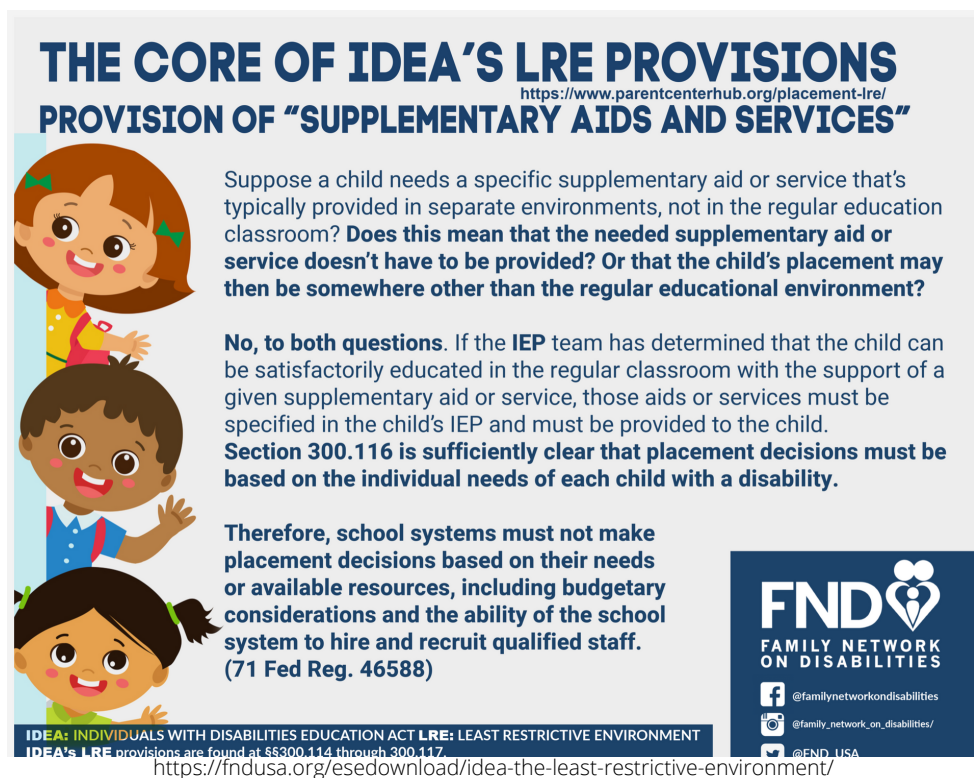


<https://vcuautismcenter.org/news/archivedEnewsletters/enewsletter.cfm?id=114>

Students may be entitled to supplementary aids that can assist them with participating in a mainstream classroom. Some examples of aids may include:

- Access to an augmentative or alternative speech device for communication
- Hearing assistive devices (such as an FM system, microphones, etc.)
- Allowing extra breaks and/or more time to complete assignments
- Mobility aids (ex: walkers, wheelchairs, ramps, etc.)
- Offering additional or 1:1 instruction

If the use of supplementary aids for the general education classroom are rejected, an explanation and a list of the assessments used to make the placement decision must be provided **in writing** by the school to the student's caregivers. **Caregivers have the right to disagree with a placement decision and make an appeal.** IDEA safeguards allow for mediation and due process procedures to aid caregivers in reaching an agreement with the school system.



**THE CORE OF IDEA'S LRE PROVISIONS**  
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/placement-lre/>  
**PROVISION OF "SUPPLEMENTARY AIDS AND SERVICES"**

Suppose a child needs a specific supplementary aid or service that's typically provided in separate environments, not in the regular education classroom? **Does this mean that the needed supplementary aid or service doesn't have to be provided? Or that the child's placement may then be somewhere other than the regular educational environment?**

**No, to both questions.** If the IEP team has determined that the child can be satisfactorily educated in the regular classroom with the support of a given supplementary aid or service, those aids or services must be specified in the child's IEP and must be provided to the child. **Section 300.116 is sufficiently clear that placement decisions must be based on the individual needs of each child with a disability.**

**Therefore, school systems must not make placement decisions based on their needs or available resources, including budgetary considerations and the ability of the school system to hire and recruit qualified staff. (71 Fed Reg. 46588)**

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**IDEA: INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT LRE: LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT**  
IDEA's LRE provisions are found at §§300.114 through 300.117.  
<https://fndusa.org/esedownload/idea-the-least-restrictive-environment/>

## Resources:

**Family Network on Disabilities:** <https://fndusa.org/esedownload/idea-the-least-restrictive-environment/>

**Understood:** <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/special-education-basics/least-restrictive-environment-lre-what-you-need-to-know>

**IDEA - LRE requirements:** <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/b/300.114>

**Center for Parent Information and Resources:** <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/placement-overview/>

**PA Department of Education:** <https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/PACode/Pages/LeastRestrictiveEnvironment.aspx>