Least Restrictive Environment: School Age Considerations

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Office of Academics | Special Education Programming

BEST for **ALL**

We will set all students on a path to success.

ACADEMICS

ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE

STUDENT READINESS

TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS IN THEIR CAREER PATHWAYS

EDUCATORS

TENNESSEE WILL SET A NEW PATH FOR THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND BE THE TOP STATE IN WHICH TO BECOME AND REMAIN A TEACHER AND LEADER FOR ALL

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Tennessee Technical Assistance Network (TN-TAN)

provides school districts, administrators, educators, and families access to high-quality training, resources, and supports designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, ages 3-22.

Intensive Behavior

TRIAD at Vanderbilt University Medical Center provides technical assistance for complex behavior support needs and associated training. Supports include direct instruction for staff on behavior assessment and intervention implementation, as well as ongoing coaching to help students engage within their least restrictive environments.

Preschool

AnLar assists in building capacity and systems to support meaningful access to preschool for students with disabilities. Supports include strategic action planning, professional development, leadership coaching, preschool program evaluation and support implementing evidence-based practices in inclusive settings.

RTI²-A+RTI²-B

Tennessee Tiered Supports Center assists districts and schools as they build and implement an aligned student support system. The center provides training, coaching, and resources for building an aligned framework for tiered academic and behavioral supports.

Autism

TRIAD at Vanderbilt University Medical Center provides training, consultation, and coaching services designed to support educators in their classrooms and develop school and system-wide supports to address needs specific to students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Assistive Technology

The Assistive Technology Project (ATP) assists districts and staff in building capacity to provide assistive technology supports for students with disabilities. Supports include strategic action planning, professional development, direct coaching for staff, and access to AT equipment-lending libraries for assessment trials.
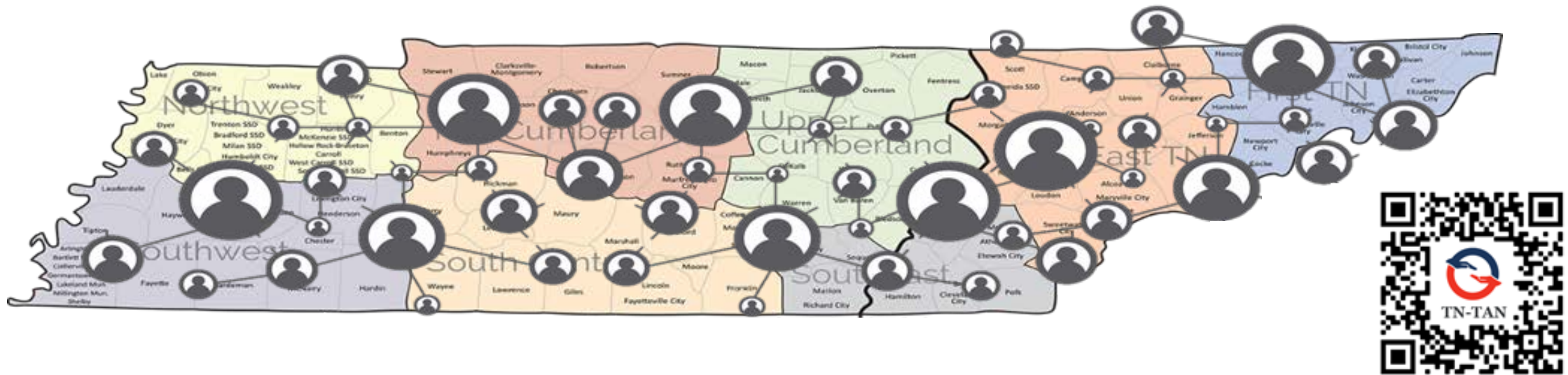
Secondary Transition

Transition Tennessee provides a range of services to transition stakeholders to improve in-school and post-school outcomes for transition-aged students (14-22) with disabilities. Supports include tiered technical assistance for in-school transition stakeholders and resources and services specific to educator and family needs.

TN-TAN: The Vision

A coordinated network that implements strategic supports to school districts, administrators, educators, and families through high-quality training, resources, and supports designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, ages 3-22.

Autism • Inclusive Preschool • Intensive Behavior • RTI^2-A+RTI^2-B • Family Engagement

• Assistive Technology • Secondary Transition

TN-TAN: The Vision

Universal

Targeted
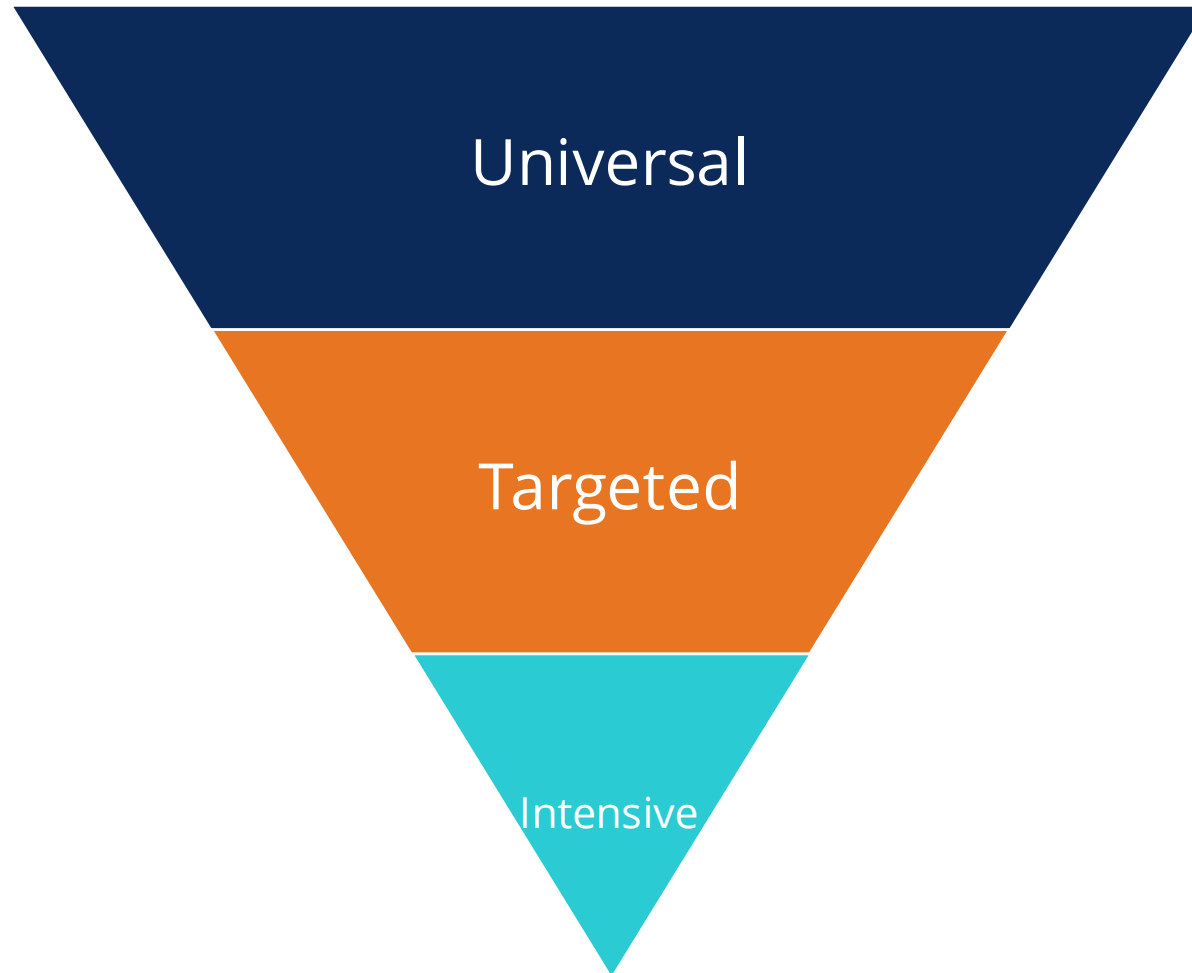
Intensive

TN-TAN Website
- Online Modules
- Materials and Resources
- CoPs

Referrals
- Requests via TN-TAN Website
- Priority assignments by the Department

Intensive District Support
- Support/Partnerships that extend over months/years

TDOE Coordination of Special Education

Office of Academics
Programmatic Design

Office of the Commissioner
Data Reporting

CORE Regional Intervention Specialists
Implement Strategic Support

Tennessee Technical Assistance Network
Implement Strategic Support

Office of Operations
Monitor Programs and Supports

Office of General Counsel
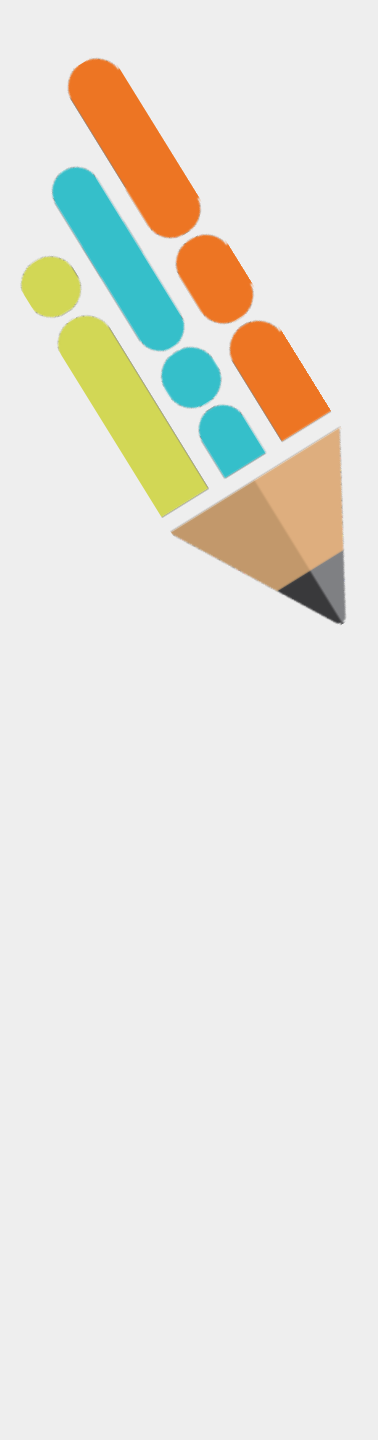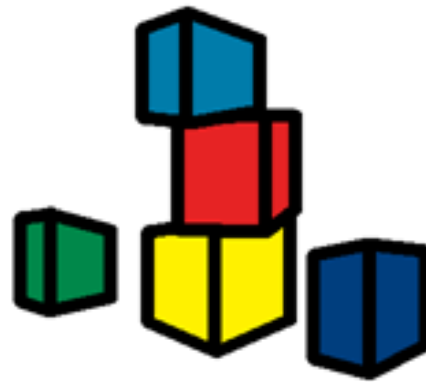Interpret the Law

Agenda

- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Mindset and LRE
- Connecting Needs to Instruction
- Connecting LRE to the Individual Education Program (IEP)
- Closing Thoughts

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Warm-up Activity

tower building

LRE

LRE is one of the many important responsibilities and decisions made by a student's individualized education program (IEP) team.

LRE is the fundamental basis that ensures students have access to the instruction, supports, and services needed for them to be successful.

LRE is not just a right….but the right thing to do.

Activity Debrief

- Was this activity:
  - Equal?
  - Equitable?
  - Fair?

- How might you build a stronger tower?

What is LRE?

- LRE – Least Restrictive Environment is:
  - Defined individually by the student's skills, strengths, and needs at that time, based on their current data.
  - Determined for each part of their day and may vary from subject to subject, hour by hour depending on what is determined least restrictive by the IEP team.
  - Determined at least at the annual IEP meeting.
    - The LRE for one IEP in no way predicts the LRE for future IEPs.
  - Not dependent on the state assessment eligibility.
    - Students assessed on the alternate assessment may be learning within the general education classroom during the whole or a portion of the day.
    - Students assessed on TCAP may be learning within a separate setting during the whole or a portion of the day.

Impact of LRE

- LRE may impact access and/or participation within:
  - standards-based instruction
  - interest-based instruction
  - peer groups
  - field trips
  - community experiences
  - extra-curricular activities

- What other areas may be impacted?
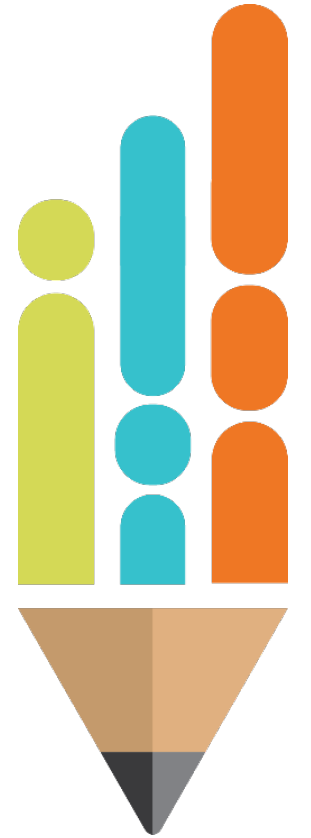
Least Dangerous Assumption

- The least dangerous assumption states that if there is not enough evidence or assessment data available, it is best to consider that an individual is able to complete a task successfully.
  - Every student is capable of completing a task without supports.
  - Everyone has different abilities and talents.
  - A person cannot be judged based on one test score.
  - A person learns best when valued.
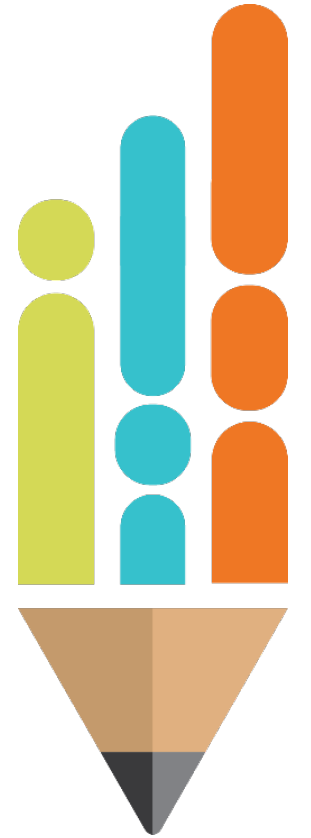 - Supports should be considered only when there is sufficient data.

Mindset and LRE

Exclusionary Mindset

LRE discussions from an exclusionary mindset focus on:

- prerequisite skills needed before considering general education;

Example:
Alison does not have the ability to focus for very long. Once she can, we can revisit the idea of her attending kindergarten for some of the day.

Exclusionary Mindset

LRE discussions from an exclusionary mindset focus on:

- prerequisite skills needed before considering general education;
- deficit-based programming;

Example:
Alison really needs to learn to identify her letters before we can discuss her attending ELA in the general education classroom.
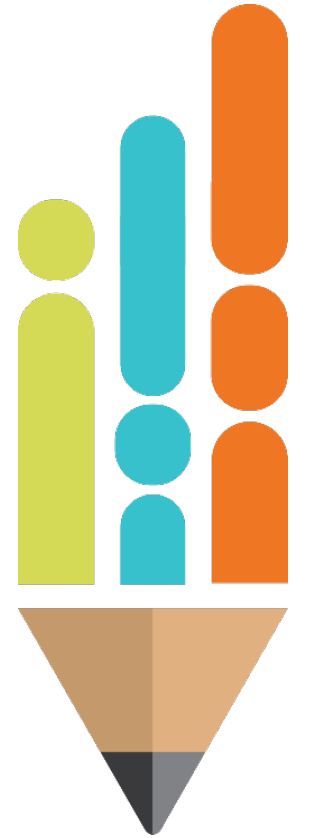
Exclusionary Mindset

LRE discussions from an exclusionary mindset focus on:

- prerequisite skills needed before considering general education;
- deficit-based programming;
- student assignment to a "program;" and

Example:
We have a classroom for students with needs as significant as Alison's. The only other option is the resource program but that is only for reading and math for 30 minutes each, or an hour daily so it's not really an option.

Exclusionary Mindset

LRE discussions from an exclusionary mindset focus on:

- prerequisite skills needed before considering general education;
- deficit-based programming;
- student assignment to a "program;" and
- "trial" or temporary placements.

Example:
Let's try Alison in the classroom for 10 minutes a day for the next four weeks before deciding that is the right placement. If she has any problems, we will need to stop the inclusion until she has the skills to be successful.

Exclusionary Mindset

- An exclusionary focus is *reactive and fails to support the student* as they "fit into" a program just like pushing blocks into the tower.
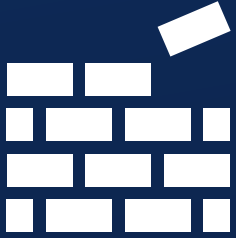
LRE Mindset

▪ LRE discussions from an **inclusionary** mindset focus on:
  – general education settings,
  – flexible access,
  – student strengths,
 – supports and services needed, and
  – individual needs.

An inclusionary focus is proactive and systematically builds supports and services much like carefully building a tall tower with multiple layers.

Connecting Needs to Instruction

- The more we know and understand our students, the more we can plan instruction that is:
  - accessible
  - meaningful
  - engaging

- The more students are engaged in instruction, the more they learn.
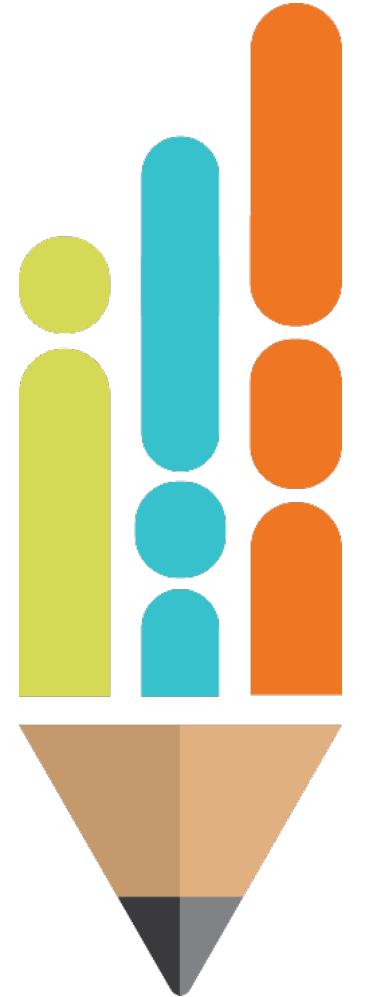
Connecting Needs to Instruction
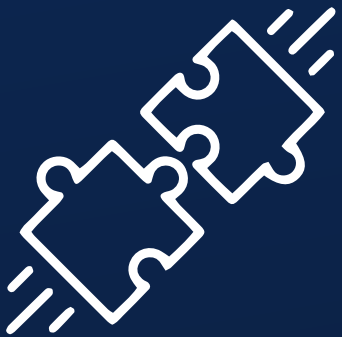
Connecting Needs to Instruction

- Access to instruction goes beyond being present in the room.

- Access involves the students' active participation including questioning, exploring, pondering, connecting, testing, concluding, synthesizing, demonstrating, etc.

- Instruction should include considerations of what to teach, when, where, and how.

LRE Reporting vs. Planning

Who?	Provider
What?	Core grade-level instruction
When?	Schedule
Where?	Least Restrictive Environment
Why?	Identified needs
How?	Intervention(s), accommodation(s)and/or modification(s)

or

Least Restrictive Environment

Who?	Provider
What?	Core grade-level instruction
When?	Schedule
Where?	Setting
Why?	Identified needs
How?	Intervention(s), accommodation(s), and/or modification(s)

LRE

- LRE when planning the student's IEP services and supports refers to a related set of requirements aimed at providing individuals with disabilities:
  - the greatest interaction with children, youth, and adults without disabilities;
  - appropriate education;
  - special assistance needed for success in the general education setting; and
  - a setting that is not contingent on funding issues.

- The LRE when reporting indicator 5 and 6 for students is the setting in which special education services and supports will be provided to the student.

Does our definition of LRE impact decisions?

Who?	Provider
What?	Core grade-level instruction
When?	Schedule
Where?	Least Restrictive Environment
Why?	Identified needs
How?	Intervention(s), accommodation(s), and/or modification(s)

How does this definition impact decisions about:

- Teaching and learning?
- Student schedule?
- The adults' interactions with the student?
- The setting the student is in for each portion of the day?

Does our definition of LRE impact decisions?

What would be different if this was our understanding of LRE?

- Teaching and learning?
- Student schedule?
- The adults' interactions with the student?
- The setting the student is in for each portion of the day?

Least Restrictive Environment	
Who?	**Provider**
What?	Core grade-level instruction
When?	Schedule
Where?	Setting
Why?	Identified needs
How?	Intervention(s), accommodation(s), and/or modification(s)

Related Services and LRE

"Services in the child's everyday naturally occurring routine are likely to have greater meaning to the child than are services in an isolated setting."
(Odom & Wolery, 2003)

"When therapeutic strategies are introduced in the child's everyday environment, they are likely to be:

- implemented by caregivers and teachers,
- frequently practiced, and
- generalized to the child's everyday routine."

(Justice, Sofka, & McGinty, 2007)

Related Services and LRE

- "When therapy is integrated into classroom routines, research shows that four times as much communication takes place between the child's teacher and therapist than when pull-out is used."

- Included children demonstrate academic gains including higher achievement test scores and high school graduation rates.
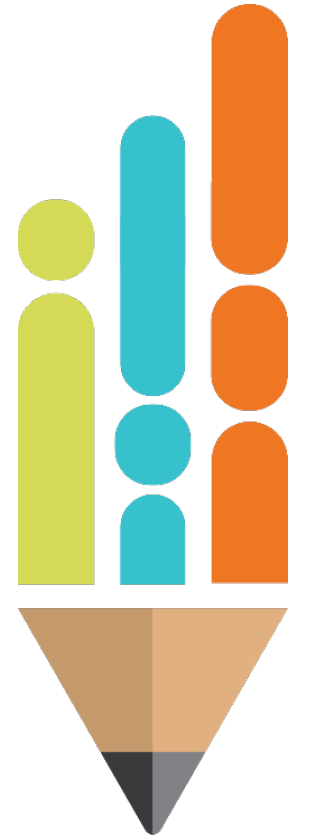
National Individualizing Preschool Inclusion Project, Implementation Manual, 2nd Edition. May 2006.
Strain, P. (2017). Four-year follow-up of children in LEAP randomized trial: Some planned and accidental findings.
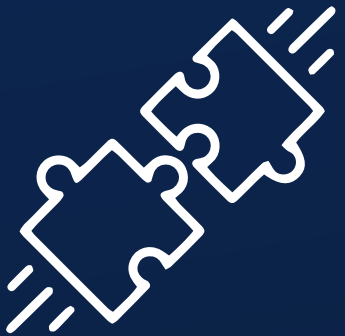
Continuum of Services

- Schools must ensure that a student's needs are met and, for students on an IEP, that they are taught according to the LRE determined by the IEP team (34 C.F.R. § 300.114, 34 C.F.R. §§ 104.33 through 104.37).

- Schools must also ensure that a student is actively engaged in meaningful instruction (State Board of Education Policy 2.101.2.a).

Connecting LRE to the IEP

LRE Statement in the IEP

The LRE statement must address why a student will be removed from the student's regular class to receive any special education or related services.

Quality Example: *Julie is provided accommodations in her English Language Arts (ELA), science and social studies classes and has support from a special education teacher for 45 minutes per day during the ELA block in the general education classroom so she can receive the majority of her instruction in her regular classroom with non-disabled peers. She will also receive 30 minutes of daily intensive reading intervention addressing basic reading skills in a special education setting during a portion of her ELA block.*

Julie will participate in all extracurricular and nonacademic activities without special education services or supports.

Participation in Non-Academic and Extracurricular Activities

- Each public agency must ensure that each child with a disability participates with nondisabled children in the extracurricular services and activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of that child. The public agency must ensure that each child with a disability has the **supplementary aids and services** determined by the child's IEP team to be appropriate and necessary for the child to participate in nonacademic settings. 34 C.F.R. § 300.117.

- Non-academic and extracurricular activities may include (not an exclusive list):
  - Meals
  - Recess
  - Athletics
  - Counseling services
  - Transportation
  - Health services
  - Recreational activities
  - Clubs sponsored by the LEA

Activity: Changing the Conversation

LRE is designed for the student. Understanding that all schools must provide a continuum of supports and services changes the conversation.

We don't have that program available at our school.

Let's determine the LRE for your student throughout the day.

Closing Thoughts

Thank You!

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TN Department of Education

Tuesday-Thursday
Please Share Your Feedback:

You may access the PD by navigating here:
https://stateoftennessee.formstack.com/forms/2023fpi_pd_survey

Department of
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