

“LRE” - Least Restrictive Environment

When writing an IEP for a student, we must comply with regulations by recommending “the least restrictive environment” where the student can make effective progress and receive an “educational benefit”. The least restrictive environment for each student differs, depending on his/her needs. For one student, the least restrictive environment may be in a general education classroom with special education support since he may benefit from being in that setting. However, for another student with different needs, the least restrictive environment where he will receive an educational benefit may be in a substantially separate program or private school setting. The Team will review assessment and performance data carefully prior to determining what the least restrictive environment for a particular child will be.

“FAPE” – Free and Appropriate Public School Education

Another one of the district’s legal mandates is to provide a child with “FAPE”. The definition of a “FAPE” in Massachusetts is:

- A free, appropriate public education
- The education is tailored to a student’s unique needs
- The education is “ ***reasonably calculated to provide the student with an educational benefit to enable him/her to make meaningful, effective, measurable, and demonstrable educational progress***”
- In Massachusetts, such progress is measured in relation to the student’s potential
- The education is delivered in the least restrictive environment (i.e. LRE) appropriate to meet the student’s needs.

The “FAPE” mandate greatly influences the Team’s discussion and development of an IEP.

Based on the definition of FAPE, the school district **is not required** to provide a program that is “in the best interest of the child” or that promises success. Instead, the program should promise a benefit – progress.

Since the focus is on progress, data collection comparing a student’s progress to baseline data is very helpful. If a student is not making demonstrable progress, it is important to ensure that the IEP is being fully implemented. If it is, it is important to look at whether or not there should be changes in accommodations, modifications, or services for the student.