



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Exceptional Student Services (ESS) / Data Management

Frequently Asked Questions – Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Students Ages 6–21 (School Age)

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Q1: HOW SHOULD I CALCULATE THE PERCENTAGE OF TIME INSIDE THE REGULAR CLASS FOR A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY?

A: To calculate the amount of time spent inside the regular classroom for a student with a disability between the ages of 6 and 21, use the following formula:

$$\# \text{ of hours spent in a regular class} / \text{total} \# \text{ of hours in a school day} * 100$$

The total number of hours (denominator) should include lunch, recess, and study periods.

Time spent outside the regular classroom receiving services unrelated to the student's disability should be considered time inside the regular classroom.

Educational time spent in age-appropriate community-based settings that include students with and without disabilities should be counted as time spent in the regular classroom.

Q2: HOW DO I CALCULATE THE PERCENTAGE OF TIME INSIDE THE REGULAR CLASSROOM WHEN A STUDENT HAS A SHORTENED SCHOOL DAY?

A: When calculating the percentage of time that a student spends inside the regular classroom, the denominator should include the total number of hours in a student's school day. If a student does not attend for a full school day, the calculation should only include the number of hours that the student attends school.

Q3: HOW SHOULD TIME SPENT DURING LUNCH, RECESS, AND STUDY PERIODS BE COUNTED WHEN CALCULATING TIME SPENT INSIDE THE REGULAR CLASSROOM? ARE THERE SOME CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THESE TIMES MIGHT BE CONSIDERED TIME IN WHICH THE STUDENT IS SEGREGATED FROM NONDISABLED STUDENTS (E.G., SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS MAY BE SEPARATED SO THAT THEY EAT LUNCH IN THE CAFETERIA WITH THEIR SPECIAL EDUCATION PEERS)?

A: The time a student with disabilities spends during lunch, recess, and study periods should be counted as time spent inside the regular classroom, unless the student has been removed from the environment with nondisabled students in order to receive services related to the student's disability. If a student is segregated from nondisabled students during lunch, recess, or study periods, the time spent during that activity should not be included in the numerator of the calculation of percentage of time in the regular classroom.

Q4: HOW DO I REPORT LRE FOR A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY WHO HAS BEEN UNILATERALLY PLACED BY A PARENT OR GUARDIAN IN A PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL FACILITY?

A: A student unilaterally placed in a private residential facility by a parent or guardian is reported as a *private school placement* category (service code J).

This category includes a student enrolled by parents or guardians in a regular parochial or other private elementary or secondary school whose basic education is paid through private resources and who receives special education and related services at public expense from a PEA under a service plan.

Q5: HOW SHOULD I REPORT LRE FOR A PARENTALLY PLACED PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY WHO RECEIVES SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES FROM MY PEA?

A: This case fits the private school placement category (service code J) as the student is enrolled by a parent or guardian in a regular parochial or other private elementary or secondary school and the student's basic education is paid through private resources and the student receives special education and related services at public expense from a PEA under a service plan.

Q6: HOW SHOULD I REPORT A STUDENT WHO IS PLACED BY COURT ORDER IN A RESIDENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY (OTHER THAN A HOSPITAL) AND IS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES UNDER AN IEP IN THAT SETTING?

A: A student with a disability who is placed by a state-placing agency in a residential treatment center is reported as a *public or private residential facility* category (service code EA or EB or EC).

Selection of the service code is based on the percentage of time the student is inside the regular classroom. See service code definitions for complete details.

Q7: HOW SHOULD I REPORT LRE FOR A STUDENT WHO IS PLACED IN A SHORT-TERM PUBLIC RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT (E.G., LESS THAN A WEEK) ON THE CHILD COUNT DATE?

A: On the child count date, if the student is in a residential facility for students with disabilities at public expense, even if the duration of that placement is intended to be short term, the student would be reported in the *public or private residential facility* category (service code E).

Q8: WOULD THE REPORTING OF LRE FOR A STUDENT PLACED IN A SECURE-CARE FACILITY VARY DEPENDING ON WHETHER THE STUDENT IS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES IN A ONE-ON-ONE SETTING OR IN A SMALL GROUP SETTING OF PEERS WITH AND WITHOUT IEPS?

A: No. In either situation, a student who is receiving special education and related services in a secure-care facility should be reported with service code FA or FB or FC.

Selection of the service code is based on the percentage of time inside the regular classroom. See service code definitions for complete details.

Q9: HOW SHOULD I REPORT LRE FOR A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY WHO ATTENDS AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL OR PARTICIPATES IN AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN AN ALTERNATIVE SETTING FOR STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES?

A: Educational time spent in age-appropriate settings that include students with and without disabilities should be considered time spent in the regular classroom.

Q10: HOW DO I REPORT LRE FOR A STUDENT WHO PARTICIPATES IN A JOINT TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION DISTRICT (JTED) PROGRAM? DOES THE REPORTING CATEGORY VARY DEPENDING ON WHETHER THE PROGRAM PROVIDES SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT TO THE STUDENT?

A: Educational time spent in age-appropriate community-based settings that include individuals with and without disabilities should be counted as time inside the regular classroom when calculating the percentage of time a student has spent inside the regular classroom. This is true regardless of whether special education support is provided to the student in that setting.

Q11: HOW SHOULD LRE BE REPORTED FOR A STUDENT WHO IS HOMESCHOOLED AND RESIDES WITHIN MY DISTRICT BOUNDARIES?

A: Home-schooled students are defined the same as students that are parentally placed in private schools. These students would be reported with service code J.

Q12: IF A STUDENT HAS MORE THAN ONE DISABILITY CATEGORY, HOW IS THE SERVICE CODE DETERMINED/REPORTED?

A: When reporting the service code for a student with more than one disability, consider services for all disabilities provided collectively to determine the correct service code to report. From a SAIS-reporting perspective, if a student with more than one disability is reported with multiple service codes at a given time, this will result in an integrity failure.

Q13: WHAT IF I HAVE A STUDENT WHO MEETS ONE OF THE FOUR DISABILITY NEEDS THAT QUALIFY FOR SERVICE CODE I AND ALSO HAS A SEPARATE STAND-ALONE DISABILITY NEED THAT DOES NOT? WON'T THAT VIOLATE THE "ONE SERVICE CODE PER STUDENT AT A GIVEN TIME" RULE?

A: As long as the student is eligible for one of the disability needs, A, MD, OI, or SID, then service code I can also be reported with any other stand-alone disability need category. If service code I is reported for a student that is not eligible for either A, MD, OI, or SID, this will result in an integrity failure.