

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding LRE

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees students with disabilities the right to be educated with their peers in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. The IEP team determines the supports and accommodations necessary for successful participation in the general education classroom and other special education services as needed. According to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, schools are responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities make Adequate Yearly Progress. One component of implementing IDEA and NCLB legislation is determining effective practices to educate students with disabilities in general education classes alongside their peers without disabilities. The goal of this document is to provide information regarding the education of students with disabilities in general education settings.

What does "inclusion" mean?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) and its preceding legislation do not include the term "inclusion," consequently; a legal definition has not been established. Inclusion in its broadest meaning, implies that students with disabilities are a part of the overall school community and should be included in all activities associated with the school. Some of the confusion over the use of "inclusion" rises from its inconsistent use. As educators have worked to include students with disabilities in the general curriculum, the term "inclusion" has been used to describe this effort. In general, the term "inclusion" means that students with disabilities participate in the same activities as their peers without disabilities including, general education classes, extracurricular organizations, and social activities. The term inclusion also implies that students are provided services and supports in the general education setting before being removed to a special education classroom or excluded from an activity.

How is LRE determined for an individual student?

The IEP team, which includes parents and educators, determines the educational placement for each student. The decision should be made on an individual basis. The IEP team must first consider providing services in the general education class with the full range of supports (e.g. accommodations, differentiated instruction, and personnel supports) before considering providing those services in a special education setting. If the IEP team determines that the least restrictive environment is not the general education classroom for all or part of the day, it must provide an explanation in the IEP as to why the general education classroom is not appropriate. [Pages 4-6 of An Administrator's Guide to the Instruction of Students with Disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment](#) provides a systematic process for IEP teams to use when making those decisions.

Are students with disabilities able to meet the demands of the general education curriculum?

The vast majority of students with disabilities have the potential to meet the grade level standards. Over the past few years, as more students with disabilities have been educated in the general education classroom, Georgia has seen significant increases in the percentage of those students meeting or exceeding expectations on the CRCT.

What supports can be provided to students with disabilities so that they can be successful?

A student with a disability should be provided accommodations that assist him/her to be successful in general education or special education settings. Accommodations can be made to various components, including but not limited to the instructional delivery, materials, evaluations, and settings. For example, a student may need printed materials provided in Braille or additional time to complete assignments. Accommodations are individually determined by each student's IEP team.

What are the differences between accommodations and modifications?

Accommodations are alterations that allow for a student's learning needs but do not lower the level of expectations for the students. Teachers implement accommodations for students with disabilities when they are expected to reach the same level of proficiency as their non-disabled peers. An accommodation that is provided to a student with a disability during assessment should be used routinely during instruction and should ensure that the assessment measures what the student knows and is able to do.

Modifications are alterations to the instructional process that results in a change in the content or construct being instructed or assessed. Modifications allow for a student's learning needs that enable him/her to reach a different

level of proficiency than his non-disabled peers.

Additional information regarding accommodations during state required assessments can be found at the GADOE [Assessment and Accountability](http://www.gadoe.org/ci_testing.aspx) webpage at http://www.gadoe.org/ci_testing.aspx.

Who provides accommodations?

Accommodations may be provided by a variety of school personnel including but not limited to the general education teachers, special education teachers, related services personnel, and support personnel.

May assistive technology be used as an accommodation?

Yes. Students with disabilities may need assistive technology devices and services in order to participate, progress, and achieve in the general education curriculum. Assistive technology may include, but is not limited to, text reading software, books on tape, and adapted computers. The [Georgia Project for Assistive Technology](#) website provides additional information that can assist IEP teams consider assistive technology for students with disabilities.

What type of personnel supports may be provided to students with disabilities who are educated in general education settings?

There are many different options. The general education teacher may receive support from other personnel in a variety of ways. A special education teacher may provide technical assistance to the general education teacher. Supportive instruction may also be provided in which various personnel (e.g., paraprofessionals, educational interpreters, and job coaches) provide support in the general education class. The special education teacher may also partner with the general education teacher to co-teach a class that includes students with and without disabilities. [Pages 10-15 of An Administrators' Guide to the Instruction of Students with Disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment](#) provides a complete description of personnel supports.

What is "co-teaching?"

Co-teaching occurs when a special education teacher and a general education teacher share the teaching responsibilities for a class which includes students with and without disabilities. Both teachers are equally responsible for planning, the delivery of instruction, grading, IEP implementation, and classroom management for all students. Instruction is enhanced for students when there are two teachers in a room with different areas of expertise. The general education teacher provides expertise in the content area while the special education teacher provides expertise in differentiating instruction.

What can be done to promote effective co-teaching?

Teachers need professional learning opportunities on collaboration, differentiated instruction, the models of co-teaching, and how to ensure that both teachers are used effectively. In addition, teachers need time to plan collaboratively on a regular basis for instruction, assessment, and classroom management. In addition, school personnel should collaborate with parents of students with disabilities to determine if co-taught classes are appropriate for their child with a disability.

How can we structure the school schedule so that co-teachers have common time to plan?

School personnel in Georgia have reported that scheduling students with disabilities and their general and special education teachers first provides for the maximum flexibility in providing common time to plan. School administrators may also elect to create common planning times for co-teachers while others perform school duties (e.g., bus duty, cafeteria duty, hall duty). For a complete description of effective scheduling practices, please review [An Administrator's Guide to the Instruction of Students with Disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment](#).

Are there a maximum number of students with disabilities who may be educated in a co-taught class?

The class size rule for special education remains the same in a co-teaching class as it does in a pull out special education class. There is nothing in the Georgia Board of Education Rule that allows the number of special education

students in a co-teaching class to exceed that maximum class size. That number is only inclusive of those students whose IEP documents the need for a co-taught class during that instructional segment. There may be additional students with disabilities in that segment that do not require the support of a co-teaching team.

Is there a maximum number of total students who may be educated in a co-taught class?

The class size rule for the total number of students remains the same for a general education class whether it is a co-taught class or a class taught solely by a general education teacher.

How are co-taught classes funded?

Co-taught classes, like all other classes, are funded through Georgia's Full Time Equivalent (FTE) reporting process. Students with IEPs designating co-taught services are reported with their disability specific FTE Program Code and earn funding at their disability specific special education FTE Funding Program Category (Special Education Categories I and IV). General education students are reported with the applicable general education FTE Program Code and earn funding in a general education FTE Funding Program Category. Consideration should be given to the Funding Class Size for both special education and general education classes when placing students in co-taught classes. The Georgia Board of Education Rule [160-5-1-.08 Class Size](#) has additional information regarding funding.

The No Child Left Behind legislation and the IDEA 2004 requires that all teachers who teach core academic subjects, including special education teachers, are "highly qualified" in that subject matter. Does a co-teaching class meet the "highly qualified" requirements?

Yes. If the general education teacher is "highly qualified" in the subject matter, then a co-teaching team meets the provision. The special education teacher is "highly qualified" to provide special education services in a co-taught class while the general education teacher is considered highly qualified in the content area.

Does the Certified Personnel Inventory (CPI) report, which documents teachers' "highly qualified" status, impact funding?

No. The CPI report does not impact funding. For a complete description of the CPI reporting process, please access the [2008 CPI Resources](#).

Is the Georgia Department of Education providing training and support to school systems as they educate more students with disabilities in general education classes?

Over the last several years, the Georgia DOE has collaborated with the Center for Collaborative Education at Georgia State University and the First District RESA to provide training to personnel from approximately 400 schools. This collaborative initiative was funded by the Georgia State Improvement Grant and provided ongoing training to school teams on administrative issues (e.g., school scheduling and funding) and instructional practices that support students with disabilities in general education classes. The Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) currently provides training to local school systems on successfully educating students with disabilities in general education and special education settings. The GLRS website provides contact information for your local [GLRS](#) program.

How can a school begin to include more students with disabilities in general education classes?

Collaborate with the special education administrators in your school system. They can provide information on promising practices. It is also beneficial to learn from the experiences of other schools who are effectively educating students with disabilities. Many personnel have found it helpful to observe the instructional and leadership practices that are provided in those schools. To speak with someone regarding effectively educating students with disabilities in general education classes, contact Susan Brozovic at the Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Supports, at 404-657-9956 or <mailto:sbrozovic@doe.k12.ga.us>.