

# THE SPECIAL EDGE SUPPLEMENT

In 1997, Congress reaffirmed its commitment to the provisions of an equal educational opportunity for all students, including those with disabilities. Specifically, changes were made in the provisions of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) addressing issues of educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Over the past several years, there have been a number of efforts throughout California to emphasize and prioritize general education and other LRE placements, programs, and supports, as determined appropriate by Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams. In line with these efforts and in recognition of the new emphasis within IDEA '97, the commitment to LRE and equal educational opportunities for all students must be renewed, expanded, and enhanced. To that end, the California State Department of Education (CDE) has initiated a statewide *LRE Initiative* intended to build on and expand past and current LRE programs and supports.

The *1997 Amendments to the IDEA* provide a strong preference for educating students with disabilities in general education classes with appropriate aids and supports. In order to ensure programs and supports in the LRE, IEP teams must consider the extent to which the student will be able to participate in general education and what range of supplemental aids and services would facilitate the student's placement and meaningful participation and learning in that environment. If the IEP team determines that such services are necessary,

## Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

then those services must be delineated in the student's IEP and provided to the student. Such supports may include, but are not limited to, Braille instruction, positive behavioral interventions, communication aids, assistive technology devices and services, language supports, related services, curricular modifications or adaptations, and classroom assistant support.

If it is determined that a student with disabilities cannot be educated satisfactorily in the general education classroom, even for some

portion of the school day, then the student's IEP team must provide the specific rationale for this on the IEP, and select the appropriate option in the array of alternative placements that best meets the student's needs. Whatever placement and program is determined appropriate for the student within the IEP process, opportunities must be maximized for the student to interact with nondisabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate. Discussions by the team should continue regarding transition to less restrictive settings within the continuum of options.

In addition to the issues of services and placement previously mentioned, there are other LRE-related elements. All students with disabilities, regardless of placement or program, must have access to the general education curriculum and to district and state assessments. All students, including those with disabilities, must be held to high expectations, according to state and district standards of performance, as delineated in

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their IEPs. If the IEP team determines that the student cannot participate in the district and/or state assessments even with accommodation(s), the student must participate in the state alternative assessment program. Students with disabilities must also have access to nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, including meals, recess periods, and other services. The IEP must contain the

supplementary aids and services needed by special and general education teachers and others to ensure that education in the LRE is provided and that the student can meaningfully participate in the general curriculum.

As stated earlier, the *LRE Initiative* will utilize and/or build on past efforts to provide information, training, and assistance to support the implementation of LRE in California.

## Current Efforts in Support of the LRE Initiative

- LRE Resources Project funded by CDE to provide resources on implementation of inclusive options. Development of materials, in collaboration with the California Confederation on Inclusive Education (e.g., video and manual entitled, *Paraprofessional's Role in the Inclusive Classroom, Restructuring for All the Kids* video; and *Starter Kit*). Contact Dona Meinders; email: [dmeinde@wested.org](mailto:dmeinde@wested.org); phone: 916/ 492-4013.
- LRE task force funded by CDE that developed training materials and manuals. Contact Dona Meinders; email: [dmeinde@wested.org](mailto:dmeinde@wested.org); phone: 916/ 492-4013.
- Summer Institutes in northern California (*Leadership for Inclusive Schools*) and southern California (*School Site Team Collaboration for Inclusive Education*, and a three-day conference on developing inclusive practices). Contact Dona Meinders; email: [dmeinde@wested.org](mailto:dmeinde@wested.org); phone: 916/ 492-4013.
- California Confederation on Inclusive Education (five-year federally-funded systems change project) that has provided technical assistance for school districts in coordination with the CDE to develop and maintain inclusive practices. Northern California contact: Ann Halvorsen; email: [ahalvors@aeon.csuhayward.edu](mailto:ahalvors@aeon.csuhayward.edu); phone: 510/ 885-3087. Southern California contact: Ian Pumpian; email [ipumpian@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:ipumpian@mail.sdsu.edu); phone: 619/ 594-7179. Website: <http://interwork.sdsu.edu/projects/ccie/>
- CDE-funded activities through the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), with the CalSTAT project providing training and technical assistance in the area of LRE/collaboration. Contact Tonia Sassi at CalSTAT: 707/ 206-0533, ext. 105. Website: <http://www.calstat.org>
- The California State Improvement Grant (SIG) funds CalSTAT to support and develop partnerships with schools and families by providing training, technical assistance, and resources to both special and general education. The grant focuses, in part, on LRE/collaboration. Contact Tonia Sassi at CalSTAT: 707/ 206-0533, ext. 105. Website: <http://www.calstat.org>
- Supporting Early Education Delivery System (SEEDS) project with model sites and consultants for providing assistance to early childhood special education programs. Phone SEEDS at 916/ 228-2379.
- Special Education Early Childhood Administrators Project (SEECAP) Leadership training symposia for early childhood special education administrators. Contact Kathleen Finn-Rashid; email: [kfinn@sdcoe.k12.ca.us](mailto:kfinn@sdcoe.k12.ca.us); phone: 760/ 736-6310.

## Past Efforts in Support of the LRE Initiative

- *Providing Education for Everyone in Regular Schools* (PEERS) Project, a statewide systems change project (1987–92) and the *PEERS Outreach Project* (1992–95), which facilitated district initiation of integrated and inclusive options for students formerly in segregated settings.
- Research, Development, and Demonstration Project (RD&D) funded by CDE (1992–1997) to develop a collaborative relationship between the CDE, institutions of higher education, and school districts aimed at a change process for improving results for students with disabilities. This project developed products such as *Best Practices for Inclusive Education*, *Best Practices Manual*, *Inclusive Education for Young Children*, and *Research on Assessment Practices for Young Children*.
- Institutions of higher education (IHE) innovative projects initiated at the state, regional, and local level implementing LRE.



## LRE

## VIDEO

### Restructuring Schools for All the Kids

This twenty-minute video highlights the efforts of two California schools (one elementary and one high school) to restructure their general, special, and bilingual education programs to create a collaborative model of providing support for all students within the general education classroom. The video describes key components of restructuring efforts and discusses how they were accomplished for various levels of implementation: administrative, general education, special education, paraprofessional, and parent. To request a copy of the video, contact the LRE Resources Project; email: [dmeinde@wested.org](mailto:dmeinde@wested.org); or phone: 916/ 492-4013.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

<http://www.circleofinclusion.org/>  
The Circle of Inclusion website, designed for early childhood service providers and families of young children, offers information about the effective practices of inclusive educational programs for children from birth through age eight, including guidelines, staffing models, and a preschool inclusion manual.

<http://www.essentialschools.org/aboutus/phil/10cps/10cps.html>  
The website of the Coalition of Essential Schools lists its ten principles, in addition to resources, descriptions of model schools, and a field book filled with information on leadership, school design, and classroom practice.

<http://www.asri.edu/CFSP/brochure/curricib.htm>  
The Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices features the article "Curriculum and Its Impact on Inclusion and the Achievement of Students with Disabilities," by Cheryl M. Jorgensen.

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecrii/>  
The Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion website helps to identify what facilitates and presents barriers to the inclusion of disabled young children with typically developing peers.

<http://www.nectas.unc.edu/inclusion/default.html>  
The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System website offers information on legislation, research, collaborative activities, funding, and effective practices in including young children with disabilities in their communities.

[http://www.newhorizons.org/spneeds\\_ericburn.html](http://www.newhorizons.org/spneeds_ericburn.html)  
"Including Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms: From Policy to Practice," by Jane Burnette, discusses the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act related to including children with disabilities in general education classes. The article identifies trends that affect inclusive practices, describes the research base for strategies and techniques that support inclusion, and offers profiles of inclusive schools.



[http://www.newhorizons.org/spneeds\\_info.html](http://www.newhorizons.org/spneeds_info.html)  
Inclusive Learning Environments for Students with Special Needs offers a wealth of information on inclusion. The site addresses issues specific to parents and offers information on the law, sources of research, and informa-

tion on early childhood. Also find here the MESH (Making Effective Schools Happen for All Students) Manual, a useful and descriptive source of information for creating an inclusive school, organized around key components: model schools themselves; the change process; teamwork; building community; and individual student planning.

<http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/index.html>

This website, created by The Renaissance Group, is devoted to the topic of inclusion and offers a wealth of information, complete with teaching strategies and competencies; tips for preparing students, parents, and administrators for inclusion; legal requirements; and more.

<http://www.pai-ca.org/pubs/504701.htm>

This site offers the chapter of *Special Education Rights and Responsibilities* titled "Information on Least Restrictive Environment," written by the Community Alliance for Special Education (CASE) and Protection and Advocacy (PAI). It offers a comprehensive treatment of the subject, organized around the most critical questions.

<http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/otherpub/doelre.htm>

A useful question-and-answer page from the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, on LRE as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

<http://www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-2941.phtml>

This online article describes collaboration between general education and special education teachers. It identifies the various roles each teacher plays, discusses planning for effective collaboration, and describes the professional and student benefits of the effort.