



Erica Grindinger



Feb 5, 2025 9:22pm | Last reply Feb 12, 2025 3:23pm

The principle of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Removal from the general education setting should only occur when the nature of a student's disability makes it necessary for them to receive an appropriate education. Given Jacob's progress, his parents' advocacy, and the potential for theater-based supports to enhance his inclusion, the school must carefully consider how to implement these changes while also addressing concerns from his teacher.

1. Initial Steps as Principal

- [Review Jacob's Current IEP and Data](#) – I would collaborate with the special education team to assess Jacob's progress, review his most recent evaluations, and gather input from relevant staff, including his new drama teacher.
- [Schedule a Collaborative Meeting](#) – A meeting with Jacob's parents, special education staff, and general education teacher would allow for open discussion about their concerns and explore how his IEP might be revised to support full inclusion.
- [Identify Necessary Supports](#) – If theater-based strategies are effective, we must determine what in-class accommodations, teacher training, or additional resources are needed to facilitate a successful transition to full inclusion.

2. Approaching and Supporting Stakeholders

- [Jacob and His Parents](#): I would validate their enthusiasm for his progress and acknowledge their right to advocate for a less restrictive placement. I would also ensure they understand the process of modifying his IEP, emphasizing that inclusion must be implemented thoughtfully with appropriate supports.
- [Jacob's Teacher](#): Addressing her concerns directly and professionally is key. I would explain that LRE is not about placing undue burden on teachers but about providing the right supports for students to thrive in general education. I would also emphasize that inclusion benefits all students by fostering diversity, peer modeling, and social-emotional growth.

3. Guiding the Teacher Through LRE

If the teacher resists, I would clarify that under IDEA, schools are legally required to provide students with disabilities access to general education settings whenever appropriate. Section 504 further ensures that Jacob must receive reasonable accommodations, such as the theater-based strategies his parents have identified as beneficial. Decisions must be data-driven, not based on teacher preference, and should prioritize Jacob's right to an inclusive education unless significant evidence shows he cannot succeed even with appropriate supports.

- Share research on inclusive teaching strategies that align with Jacob's strengths, such as structured drama-based interventions.
- Offer coaching and peer support from educators experienced in inclusive practices.

4. Professional Development Plan

The teacher's resistance suggests a need for professional development. I would implement:

- [LRE & Inclusion Training](#): This training would cover the legal framework of inclusion under IDEA and Section 504. Under IDEA, schools must ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers whenever appropriate. Section 504 further mandates that students receive the accommodations necessary to access the general education curriculum without discrimination. The training would focus on best practices for inclusive instruction, such as universal design for learning (UDL), co-teaching models, and structured supports, ensuring that all teachers feel equipped to facilitate inclusive learning environments. (Trainings would be including Culturally Responsive Teaching and Collaborative Support Systems).

5. Addressing Race in This Scenario

This situation involves both disability rights and racial equity. I would ensure that Jacob's family feels heard and supported, reinforcing that race should never be a barrier to receiving equitable educational opportunities. Additionally, I would:

- Conduct equity-focused discussions to promote understanding and prevent bias from influencing educational decisions.
- Work with the district's diversity and inclusion team to provide resources and training that foster culturally responsive teaching.
- Create a clear reporting process for any future concerns about racial bias in educational decision-making.

This scenario presents a valuable opportunity to reinforce LRE, inclusive practices, and racial equity. By taking a collaborative, data-informed approach, we can ensure Jacob receives the education he is entitled to while supporting his teacher in making this transition successfully.