

Guidelines for Understanding Least Restrictive Environment Decisions for DE-ELS

The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Requirement Defined

According to IDEA, “Each public agency shall ensure to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.” (DE Admin Code §923.14.2)

There are three levels of support that may be considered in determining the Least Restrictive Environment for students with disabilities:

Level #1: Accommodations

Accommodations defined: accommodations are any changes to activities, instruction, materials, or classroom environment that do not change the minimal requirements of the assessment/task. Accommodations are utilized for the purpose of providing access to the general education curriculum. It is the responsibility of the IEP team to determine what accommodations are required in order for the student to access the general education curriculum. Necessary accommodations must be specified as appropriate to each class, course, or content area.

Level #2: Modifications

Modifications defined: Modifications are changes to products, assessments, or materials that require a deviation from the standards in order to meet the student’s needs. It is the responsibility of the IEP team to determine what modifications are required in order for the student to access the general education curriculum and which specific modifications are appropriate for each class, course or content area.

Level #3: Personnel Supports

Personnel Supports defined: Personnel supports include additional special education personnel in the general education classroom providing required support or instruction to students with disabilities. Personnel supports may include: learning support coach, interpreters, and/or paraprofessional assistance.

Guidance for Recording Observations for Students with Disabilities

Process for Recording Data Results in GOLD:

1. Observe and reflect on the level of your student's skills on all survey items with or without accommodations, modifications, supports, and/or services.
2. Record levels in GOLD checkpoint.
 - ➔ If a student is using accommodations, modifications, supports, and/or services to reach that objective level:
 - Click the appropriate progression level and finalize the checkpoint.
 - Write the accommodation in the document: **Recording Accommodations and Supports on DE-ELS Objectives for Learning**.
 - When all accommodations have been recorded, upload the completed **Recording Accommodations and Supports on DE-ELS Objectives for Learning** to the "Documentation" tab of that student's profile.
 - ➔ If IEP guidance determines that a certain objective cannot be observed:
 - Click the "Not Observed" option if IEP guidance determines that an objective cannot be observed.
 - When you click "Not Observed" for each objective, choose "Other."
 - Briefly describe why you are choosing to exempt your student from that particular survey item.
 - Record accommodations, modifications, supports, and/or services you offered to your student before determining that they objective cannot be observed.

If you believe that your student should be excluded from certain objectives in the Delaware Early Learner Survey, he/she must meet the criteria on the **Guidelines for Choosing to Exclude Students from the Delaware Early Learner Survey Objectives**, to be signed with your student's IEP team.

Below you will find an example of how a teacher is observing and recording DE-ELS objectives for a student with "Level #3: Personnel Supports" in her least restrictive environment.

Lilly, a five year old student diagnosed with Autism has exceptional reading skills, however, struggles with appropriate interaction with peers. She struggles with following classroom routines independently and transitioning from task to task. The general education classroom is the environment that allows her to practice and utilize her social skills and is the least restrictive environment for her, as decided by the IEP team. Lilly's IEP team decided that a paraprofessional in the classroom to assist Lilly and 3 other students would help Lilly to learn classroom routines, assist with initiation of social contacts, and provide Lilly breaks, when necessary. The paraprofessional also assists Lilly in transition times in the classroom by providing picture cues and prompts to remind her of upcoming transitions.

Lilly is practicing DE-ELS objectives, and it is appropriate for her teacher to observe and record the level of Lilly's skills on all survey items. Her teacher will record her level on each progression and will list any accommodations and supports that Lilly had in reaching that level on the document *Recording Accommodations and Supports on DE-ELS Objectives for Learning*. After the observation window closes and she has finalized all her checkpoints, she will upload her completed document by clicking the "Documentation" tab and uploading the *Recording* document to Lilly's profile.