

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



# An Administrator's Guide to the Instruction of Students with Disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment

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**GaDOE - Division for Special Education Services and Supports**

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this guide is to provide school administrators strategies to systematically prepare their staff and building to increase the opportunities for students with disabilities to be educated in the least restrictive environment, access the general education curriculum, and be integrated members of the school community. Through these efforts, students with and without disabilities will be provided the opportunity for increased instruction in the grade level standards of the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE).

To increase achievement for students with disabilities, there must be an increase in access to the general education curriculum. This guide contains information intended to assist administrators in their effort to provide all students with an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. This can be achieved through an understanding of:

- The decision-making process during the IEP meeting to determine appropriate services for students with disabilities
- How to best use special education resources
- Service options, personnel supports, and Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
- Assessing future needs through projections of services required for the coming school year
- Scheduling to meet the needs of all students

## **The Decision-Making Process at the IEP to Determine Appropriate Services for Students with Disabilities**

### **The IEP and the LRE Decision-Making Process**

Students with disabilities benefit both educationally and socially from receiving instruction with their nondisabled peers in a variety of school and community settings to receive this benefit, the IEP team must make decisions regarding services of the students with disabilities in general education settings.

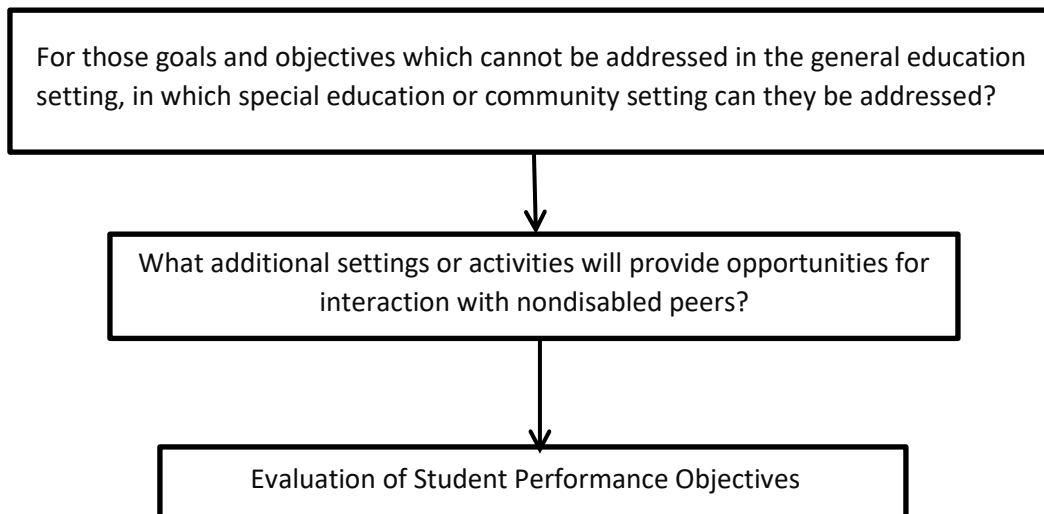
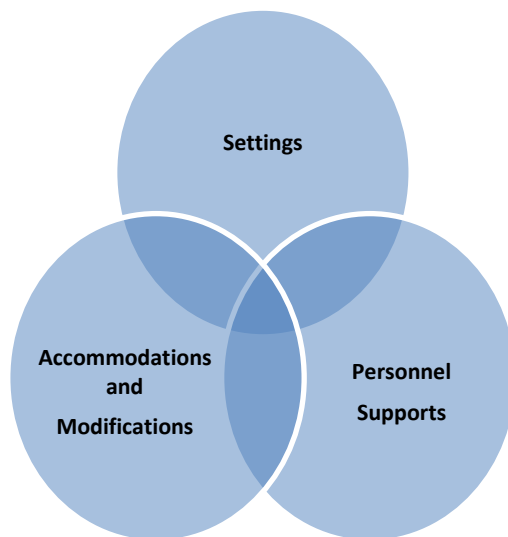
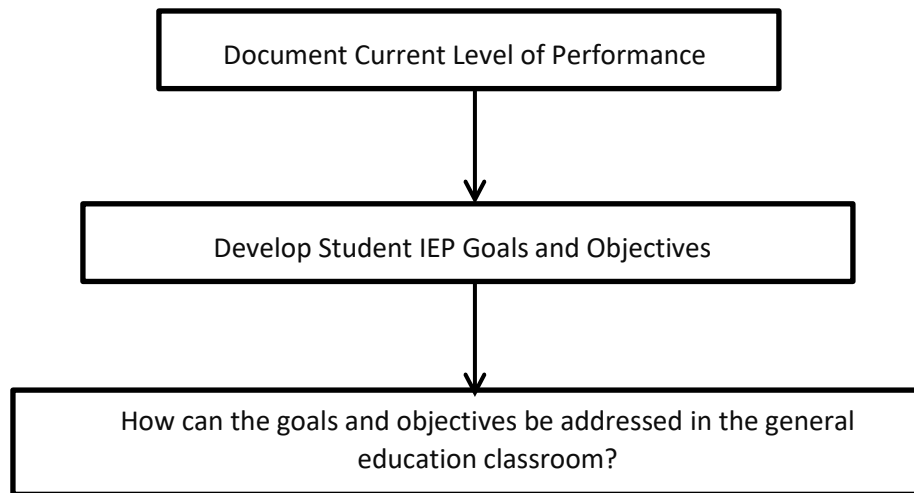
In order to make these decisions, the IEP team must review the instructional needs of the student. In order to benefit from general education Service students may require a variety of services and supports. Students with a hearing impairment may require an interpreter; a student with learning disabilities may require instruction in learning strategies in order to access the content in academic classes. A student with Asperger Syndrome may require a self-monitoring program. With appropriate accommodations, students can receive instruction in general education settings. For some students whose need for accommodations will vary across settings and objectives, the team must address each IEP objective, or

set of related objectives. Students may have varying numbers of segments in general education settings. For example, a student with moderate intellectual disabilities may be placed in general education for four segments for various functional academics and social skills instruction but receive two segments in a special education setting for self-help and community skills instruction.

To guide an IEP team through this process the six-step sequence is presented in this document.

**The IEP Team members:**

1. Document the student's current level of performance.
2. Develop objectives from data and information gathered, addressing the student's learning needs.
3. Determine which objectives may be taught in general education settings. For each objective, or set of related objectives, the IEP team members consider:
  - a. Age-appropriate and content appropriate settings available in various segment times
  - b. Accommodations to activities, materials, instruction, and/or environments necessary in each setting
  - c. Personnel support(s) for the student, teacher, and/or class.
4. For objectives which cannot be met in a general education setting, determine in which special education or community settings the objective(s) will be taught.
5. Determine settings or activities to provide additional opportunities for interaction with nondisabled peers.
6. Determine a method to evaluate the appropriateness of the IEP team's services decision(s) through ongoing assessment of student learning.



# How to Best Use Special Education Resources

## Resource Identification

Before beginning to plan for the upcoming school year, a careful review of the current resources in your building and LEA is essential.

1. Request that each staff member in the building complete the Resource Identification form (see below). This form should be completed for each general and special education teacher and other support staff.
2. Identify certification status of each teacher in the building
3. Identify special education teachers with general education content certification including the area in which they hold content certification.
4. Identify teachers in the process of adding additional certifications.

## Resource Identification Form

Complete the form below including all faculty and staff:

Name	Date	Certifications currently held	Content area of certification	Certifications in process	Are you willing to add a certification area?

## Personnel Supports and Full Time Equivalent

The following is a chart that provides an explanation of the continuum of services options and personnel supports. This continuum should be available to students with disabilities in each school. The IEP team determines the student's services and the personnel supports required to provide FAPE in the least restrictive environment.

The first column lists the name of each service option. The column labeled "Description of Service" provides a description of the amount of service to be provided, from whom the service will be provided, and the environment in which the service is provided. The column labeled FTE Data Reporting indicates the Program Code and Inclusion Code to be used for each of the service options. It is important to be sure each service is coded correctly to receive appropriate funding.

Additional information regarding the FTE inclusion codes is provided in this document. The State Rule regarding the maximum class sizes for special education is also included. *Please note:* most of Georgia's LEAs are now Charter or Strategic Waiver LEAs and may have waived class size.

- The number of special education students counted for the FTE count in a collaborative or co-taught class cannot exceed the special education maximum class size. However, you may consider the approved class size for the LEA in the Charter or Strategic Waiver.
- The total number of students in a collaborative or co-taught class cannot exceed the maximum general education class size. For example, if a high school English class can have a total of 28 students, a collaborative or co-taught high school English class may have 21 students counted as general education for FTE and 7 students counted as special education for FTE (if the special education students have various eligibilities). However, you may consider the approved class size for the LEA in the Charter or Strategic Waiver.
- A good rule of thumb is no more than 7 special education students per collaborative or co-taught class when scheduling classes.

## Service Option and Reporting Requirements

Service Options	Description of Service	Report in FTE 1	Report in FTE 3
<b>General Education</b>	Student with disability is served in the general education class with no additional personnel support from special education.	Report General Education Program Code for each segment of service; Environment Code 1-3 depending on amount of time in General Education.	Report General Education Program Code for each segment of service
<b>Supportive Instruction</b>	Student with disability receives service from personnel other than a certified special education teacher in the general education classroom. (i.e. para, interpreter, or job coach)	Report General Education Program Code for each segment of service. Report Inclusion Code 4-8 as appropriate. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP. Environment Code 1-3 depending on amount of time in General Education.	Report General Education Program Code for each segment of service. Report Inclusion Code 4-8 as appropriate.
<b>Consultative</b>	Student with disability receives at least 1 segment per month of direct service from the special education teacher in the general or special education classroom.	Report the Special Education Program Code according to the Primary Area of disability. Report Inclusion Code 9. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP. Environment Code 1-3 depending on amount of time in General Education.	Report the Special Education Program Code according to the Primary Area of disability. Report Inclusion Code 9. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP.
<b>Collaboration</b>	A special education teacher provides service to students with disabilities and shares teaching responsibilities with a general education teacher within an instructional segment in the general education classroom. <b>(less than full segment daily)</b>	Report the Special Education Program Code according to the Primary Area of disability. Report Inclusion Code 9. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP. Environment Code 1-3 depending on amount of time in General Education.	Report the Special Education Program Code according to the Primary Area of disability. Report Inclusion Code 9. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP.
<b>Co-Teaching</b>	The special education and general education teacher provide service to students with disabilities and share teaching responsibilities for the students in the general education classroom. <b>(full segment everyday)</b>	Report the Special Education Program Code according to the Primary Area of disability. Report Inclusion Code 9. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP. Environment Code 1-3 depending on amount of time in General Education.	Report the Special Education Program Code according to the Primary Area of disability. Report Inclusion Code 9. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP
<b>Small group</b>	The special education teacher provides service to students with disabilities in a special education classroom.	Report the Special Education Program Code according to the Primary Area of disability. Do not report an Inclusion Code. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP. Environment Code 1- 4 depending on amount of time in General Education.	Report the special education program code according to the Primary Area of disability, do not report an Inclusion Code. Service must be provided on the day of the count and specified in the IEP.



## Full Time Equivalent Inclusion Codes

An Inclusion Code indicates that a student with a disability, whose IEP specifies the need for specially designed instruction and/or supplemental aids or services receive special education in the general classroom. Any segment that is reported with the INCLUSION Code of '4'-'8' must be reported with General Education **PROGRAM CODE ("A"-"K" or "9")** For INCLUSION Code '9', the Program Code must be Special Education Codes 'P'-'Z' or '1'-'3'. Inclusion services received must be provided by personnel such as paraprofessionals, interpreters, job coaches and other assistive personnel.

### **Inclusion Code 4:**

Paraprofessional - Personnel employed and/or assigned to provide assistance to students with disabilities. Paraprofessionals provide educational services for a student with disabilities under the supervision of a certified teacher or administrator. Paraprofessionals may perform their duties in environments where the following are provided: Classroom instruction; physical education, speech-language instruction; vocational programs; community-based instruction, and other types of support to classroom instruction and related services.

### **Inclusion Code 5:**

Interpreter - Personnel employed and/or assigned to facilitate communication between students with hearing impairments (deaf or hard-of-hearing) by interpreting from spoken English to American Sign Language (or the reverse) and/or transliterating from spoken English to an English LEA used on the hands.

### **Inclusion Code 6:**

Job Coach - Personnel employed and/or assigned to teach, support and supervise i.e., coach, specific jobs or components of jobs to students with disabilities in a community setting.

### **Inclusion Code 7:**

Assistive or Other personnel - Personnel other than Job Coaches, Interpreters, or Paraprofessionals who are employed and/or assigned to provide assistance to students with disabilities in the least restrictive educational environment. Examples may include therapy or mobility aides.

### **Inclusion Code 8:**

Certified Teacher - Personnel who hold teaching certificates from the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission

### **Inclusion Code 9:**

Collaborative Model - General and special education teachers that are teaching in the same classroom with the special education teacher being in the classroom at least 50% of the time.

Co-teaching Model - General and special education teachers that are teaching in the same classroom with the special education teacher being in the classroom the entire segment.

# Georgia Network for Therapeutic Supports (GNETS) Program

## PROGRAM CODE = "4"

Students attending a GNETS facility or are being instructed by GNETS personnel should be reported with the GNETS PROGRAM CODE = "4" for each segment of GNETS service they receive. For example, a student is enrolled in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and is receiving 3 segments of general education without any support, report General Education Program Code "D", and 3 segments of service in the GNETS program, report Program Code "4" assuming the services are provided on the day of the count.

## Special Education Maximum Class Sizes and Caseloads

Adopted July 14, 2005, Georgia Rules and Regulations

PROGRAM AREA	DELIVERY Self-contained (S-C) Resource (R)	MAXIMUM W/O Para	CLASS SIZE With Para*	CASE- LOAD
<b>INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES</b>				
Mild	SC	10	13	14
	R	10	13	26
Moderate	SC	NA	11	11
Severe	SC	NA	7	7
Profound	SC	NA	6	6
<b>EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS</b>				
	SC	8	11	12
	R	7	10	26
<b>SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES</b>				
	SC	12	16	16
	R	8	10	26
<b>VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS</b>				
	SC	NA	6	7
	R	3	4	13
<b>DEAF/HARD OF HEARING</b>				
	SC	6	8	8
	R	3	4	11
<b>DEAF-BLIND</b>				
	SC	NA	6	7
<b>SPEECH-LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS</b>				
	SC	11	15	15
	R	7	NA	29/55
<b>ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENTS</b>				
	SC	NA	11	11
	R	4	5	15

See Rule 160-5-.08 (Class Size) for specifics.

Note: Each \*paraprofessional (para) is equivalent to 1/3 teacher and affects individual class size, caseload and LEA average proportionately. Three paras are the maximum number that can be used to increase the maximum class size for any special education class.

Note: If students from different programs/delivery models are within the same segment, the class size shall be determined by the program/delivery model with the smallest class size. The caseloads shall be determined by averaging the respective caseloads.

Note: The Service of students with autism, traumatic brain injury, or other health impairments, and significant developmental delays (grades K and above) in the above program areas will not change class sizes.

Note: Students, with an IEP designating the service location for the delivery of goals and objectives to be the general classroom environment, shall be reported in their special education program category if instruction is provided in a:

- A. Team/Collaborative Model; or
- B. Consultative Model.

## Assessing Future Needs through Projections

### Projections of Classes and Personnel Supports Needed for the Coming School Year

Projections are a "best guess" of what might be appropriate for students with disabilities for the coming school year. The IEP committee makes the final decision during the IEP meeting.

The time to begin projections is February. Before estimates can be determined regarding the number of teachers, classes, and personnel supports required for the coming school year, projections must be made regarding what services the students with disabilities will need in order to be successful in the LRE.

The form on the following page is used to gather the data required to make reliable projections. Each special education teacher should complete the form for the students on their current caseload. Directions for completing the projection form are provided on page 12. Examples of completed forms for elementary, middle, and high school follow on the next three pages. This information will need to be provided to the administrators in each school responsible for scheduling the building and hiring personnel. Special education teachers of new students entering the school in the fall, for example, fifth grade students entering middle school, will also need to provide this information.

**Caution! Projections are not service decisions.** Only an IEP committee can determine services. Projection information aids determining professional learning, space allocation, number of teacher allotments needed, and which classes will require collaboration and co-teaching.

# Special Education Projection Form for the School Year \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Total number of segments per day: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by each special education teacher for his/her caseload.

Number of segments refers to number of segments per day.

Place one grade level and one disability eligibility per page.

Student Name:	Eligibility:	Grade:	General ed. segments without support	General ed. segments with Supportive Instruction	General ed. segments with Consultation*	Collaboration segments	Co-Teaching segments	Special Education Classroom segments	Total # of Special Education segments per day

\* Consultation should not be counted as a segment requiring a special education teacher

\*\* Supportive Instruction should not be counted as a segment requiring a special education teacher.

## Directions for Completing Projection Form

- I. Make numerous copies of data collection form before you begin.

You may use several pages for your caseload.

1. At top of the page, indicate the teacher's name and number of segments in a school day,
2. Place only one grade level on each page
3. Place only one eligibility on each page.

For example, place only 9<sup>th</sup> graders with SLD eligibility on one page; use another page for 9<sup>th</sup> graders with EBD eligibility, etc. Each page should have only one grade and one eligibility.

- II. For each student on your caseload report the following information for the upcoming school year:

1. First name and last initial
2. Eligibility category of special education, i.e. SLD, EBD, OHI, MID, MOID, etc.
3. Grade for the up-coming school year (NOT the current grade)
4. Specific course/class, i.e. Algebra II, not math or US History, not social studies
5. Number of segments to be spent in each setting **per day**
6. Total number of special education segments per day for each student

- III. Service Options (and corresponding personnel supports) are defined as follows:

Service	Description of Service and Personnel Support
General Education without support	Child with disability is served in a general education class with no special education support
General Education with Additional Supportive Services	Child with disability is served in a general education class with support from a para, interpreter, job coach, or other certified personnel
General Education with collaboration	Child with disability is served in a general education class with support from a certified special education teacher 50% of the segment
General Education with co-teaching	Child with disability is served in a general education class with support from a certified special education teacher for the entire segment.

## Using Projection Data to Schedule Special Education Students

The information from the projection forms must be compiled and organized into useful data before scheduling can begin. The projection forms provide the data for determining how many resource, co-taught, collaborative, and supportive instruction classes need to be offered and scheduled for the coming school year. This information will be organized into lists of students with disabilities requiring classes with additional personnel support.

## Scheduling to Meet the Needs of All Students

The steps below describe the process for scheduling the special education students and assignment of personnel. The steps should be followed in order. An example of a Middle School special education schedule follows.

Place the number of daily segments across the top of the page. Create a column for each segment throughout the school day. Allow one more column than segments in the day, for example, if the school day has 6 segments, create 7 columns.

1. List each special education teacher and paraprofessional on a row. Allow one extra row for headers of "teacher", "1<sup>st</sup> period" etc. (see example on following page) A suggestion is to refer to the teachers by number and assign the names after the schedule is complete. This allows the person scheduling to put together a schedule that works for all students and then assign the teachers to a row on the grid.
2. From the list of student names and courses generated from the projections, begin placing each class on the grid. Write the names of the students in the blocks on the grid. This will allow everyone to see exactly which students are scheduled into each class.
3. Schedule each teacher a segment of planning time.
4. Reminders:
  - a) Students must be scheduled with special education teacher with appropriate certification.
  - b) Follow special education class size regulations for collaborative and cotaught classes – according to your Charter or Strategic Waiver.
  - c) Assign paraprofessionals to special education classes as needed.

### Georgia Elementary School (grades 4-5)

Special Education Teachers	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
<b>Teacher #1</b>	<b>Small-Group(5<sup>th</sup>) Reading</b> Brandon (SLD) Casey (SLD) Carl (SLD) Scott (OHI) Alicia (MI)	<b>Co-Taught (5<sup>th</sup>) Reading</b> Brandon (SLD) Casey (SLD) Carl (SLD) Scott (OHI) Alicia (MI) Doug (OHI) Kimberley (SLD)	<b>Co-Taught (5<sup>th</sup>) Language Arts</b> Brandon (SLD) Casey (SLD) Carl (SLD) Scott (OHI) Alicia (MI) Kimberley (SLD) Daniel (OHI) Kevin (OHI)	<b>Planning 5th-grade teachers</b>	<b>Co-Taught (5<sup>th</sup>) Social Studies / Science</b> Mathew (EBD) Daniel (OHI) Scott (OHI) Kimberley (SLD) Alicia (MI) Daniel (OHI) Kevin (OHI)	<b>Co-Taught (5<sup>th</sup>) Math</b> Alicia (MI) Leanne (EBD) Tyler (EBD) Doug (OHI) Matthew (EBD) Cody (OHI) Miranda (OHI)
<b>Teacher #2</b>	<b>Small-Group(4-5<sup>th</sup>) Reading</b> Doug (OHI) Matthew (EBD) Porsha (OHI) Kimberly (SLD) Casey (OHI)	<b>Planning 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers</b>	<b>Co-Taught (4<sup>th</sup>) Reading</b> Casey (OHI) Josh (OHI) Stephanie (SLD) Drew (SLD) Barika (SLD) Billy (MI)	<b>Small-Group(4-5<sup>th</sup>) Language Arts</b> Billy (MI) Ronny (EBD) Matthew (EBD) Erin (EBD) Josh (OHI) Delmalkeo (MI)	<b>Co-Taught (4<sup>th</sup>) Social St/ Science</b> Arabia (OHI) Casey (OHI) Alex (MI) Delmalkeo (MI) Josh (OHI) Wesley (MI) Tefrom (SLD)	<b>Co-Taught (4<sup>th</sup>) Math</b> Erin (EBD) Arabia (OHI) Tefrom (SLD) Alex (MI) Delmalkeo (MI) Wesley (MI)
<b>Teacher #3</b>	<b>Small-Group(4<sup>th</sup>) Reading</b> Josh (OHI) Stephanie (SLD) Drew (SLD) Barika (SLD) Billy (MI) Delmalkeo (MI) Wesley (MI)	<b>Small-Group(4-5<sup>th</sup>) Reading</b> Matthew (EBD) Porsha (OHI) Daniel (OHI) Mianda (01-11) Delmalkeo (MI) Wesley (MI)	<b>Small-Group (3-4<sup>th</sup>) Language Arts</b> Kale (AU) Haley (SLD) Wesley (MI) Casey (OHI) Alex (MI) Maya (OHI)	<b>Small-Group (4<sup>th</sup>) Math</b> Michael (SLD) Casey (OHI) Josh (OHI) Nick (EBD) Robbin (SLD) Jacob (SLD) Zach (SLD)	<b>Planning</b>	<b>Small-Group (4<sup>th</sup>) Social Studies / Science</b> Billy (MI) Kale (AU) Nick (EBD) Ronny (EBD) Haley (SLD) Erin (EBD)

## Putting Together the Master Schedule to Promote LRE

After completing the special education schedule, begin to build the master schedule. The steps below describe the process for scheduling the building to promote least restrictive environment. The steps should be followed in order.

1. Schedule all collaboration classes first. Select the two general education teachers that will collaborate with the corresponding special education teacher. Schedule the two general education classes for the segment. Schedule the special education teacher for the same segment.
2. Schedule these three teachers for the same planning time.
3. Repeat this process for each trio of teachers providing collaborative support.
4. Pair each special education teacher scheduled to co-teach and the special education paraprofessionals scheduled to provide supportive instruction with a general education teacher in the appropriate class and grade level.
5. Schedule all co-teaching pairs (general education and special education) with the same planning time.
6. The names of the students with disabilities in the collaborative and cotaught classes must be manually entered into a computer scheduling program.
7. The maximum class size for the collaborative and co-taught classes must be manually set to reflect the students with disabilities assigned to the class by subtracting the number of students with disabilities from the maximum class size.
8. Complete the scheduling of general education classes.
9. As IEPs are finalized, individual student schedule adjustments should be made.
10. If on a block schedule, complete the process for first and second semester.
11. If the school has a 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy, schedule the entire 9<sup>th</sup> grade separately, general education students and students with disabilities.

In summary, local school administrators and teachers are the professionals to ensure Service in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. The person responsible for scheduling must understand:

- Minimum funding size and maximum class sizes for general and special education, collaborative, and co-taught classes,
- Funding through FTE generated for each level of personnel support, and
- The balance between earning funds for general and special education services.