



Least Restrictive Environment: A World of Options and Opportunities

- Training provided by the Connecticut State Department of Education in cooperation with:
 - Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center
 - Connecticut Coalition for Inclusive Education
 - University of Connecticut Center for Developmental Disabilities

Agenda

- **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**
- **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '04)**
- **The settlement agreement in the “P.J. case”**
- **Q & A**



No Child Left Behind

- **Signed into law
January 8, 2002**
- **Improve outcomes
for ALL children**
- **Close the
achievement gap
between children
with and without
disabilities**



No Child Left Behind

- Accountability
- Doing what works
- Highly qualified teachers
- Parent involvement
Choice





Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '04)

- 1975—Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA)
- Reauthorized every five years
- Provides for a free appropriate public education or FAPE for students with disabilities
- Impact of reauthorization (2004)



IDEA '04 Changes

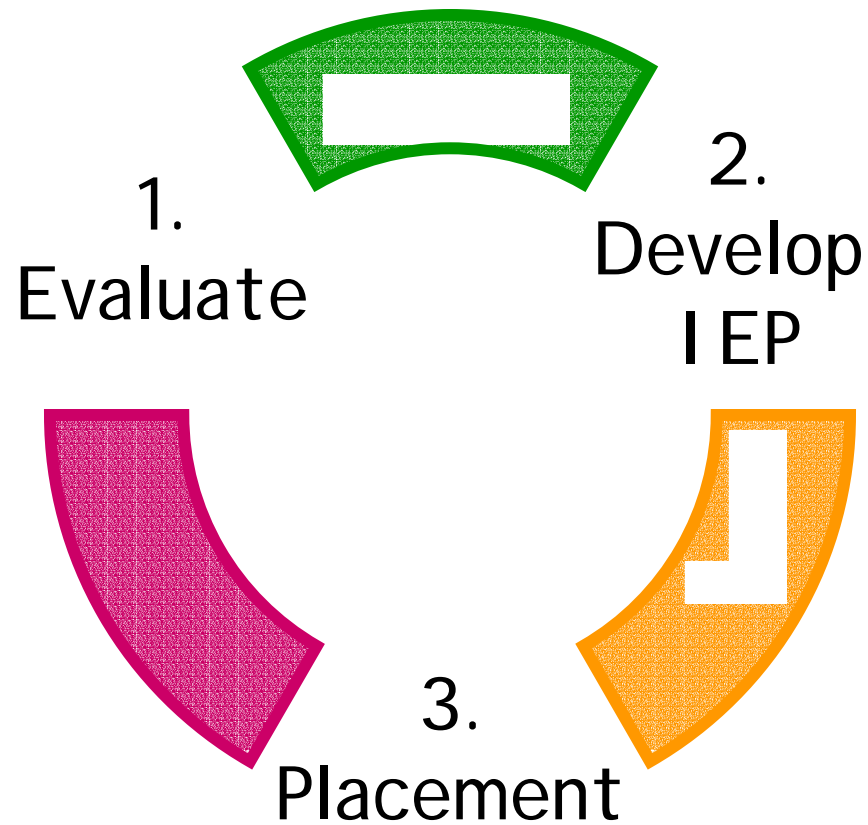
- **Aligns closely with No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**
- **Evaluation Procedures Revised**
- **IEP Provisions Changed**
- **Emphasis on Universal Design**
- **Parent Participation Modified**



Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- The foundation of IDEA
- Created for each child according to his or her individual needs
- Details the special education and related services that the district will provide to meet those needs

I EP: Planning before placement





Placement is individually determined

- Based on the child's IEP
- Determined by the child's Planning and Placement Team (PPT)
- Determined at least annually
- Is as close as possible to the child's home school

Placement in the *Least Restrictive Environment* or **LRE**

“...to the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities... are educated with children who are not disabled...”





LRE continued...

- “... removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment occurs only when 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.”



LRE continued ...

- If it is not possible to educate a child successfully in a regular education classroom with the use of supplementary aids and services, then team must consider more restrictive alternatives.



Placement in the *Least Restrictive Environment*

- Regular classroom placement is the first option the team must consider
- Access to the general education curriculum is as important as placement in a classroom

Supplementary Aids and Services

“... aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education related settings...”



Supplementary Aids and Services

“to enable children with disabilities to be educated with non disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.”



Supplementary aids and services can include changes in:

- **Environment**
- **Instructional strategies**
- **Social or behavioral support**
- **Staff support**
- **Assessment**





Environmental supports

- Special seating
- Study carrel
- Providing space for movement or breaks
- Providing help to maintain an uncluttered space



Instructional modifications

- Teaching to a child's learning style
- Providing one-to-one instruction
- Providing differentiated instruction
- Providing hands-on activities
- Using technology to support instruction

Behavioral supports

- Rest breaks
- Teaching child how to make friends
- Functional behavioral analysis
- Positive behavioral intervention plan
- Teaching independence



Staff supports

- **Enhanced staffing**
- **Co-taught classroom**
- **Small group instruction**
- **Providing staff training**
- **Collaboration time**
- **Use of paraprofessional staff**





Testing accommodations

- Allowing answers to be dictated
- Allowing additional time
- Reading test to student
- Accepting short answers
- Highlighting key directions



School wide supports

- Administrative leadership
- All staff professional development
- Early intervention
- School climate
- Positive behavioral supports
- Opportunities for collaboration
- Family involvement



IDEA provides for services in non-academic settings

- “Each public agency shall take steps to provide nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities in the manner necessary to afford children with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation in those services and activities.”



Provisions of IDEA continued...

- In determining the education placement of a child with a disability ... “unless the IEP of a child with a disability requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school that he or she would attend if nondisabled.”



P.J. et al v. State of CT et al

- Federal class action lawsuit filed in 1991 – settled in May, 2002
- Class membership: school age students with mental retardation or intellectual disabilities who are not educated in regular education classrooms



5 Goals of the Settlement Agreement

- Regular class placement
- Time with non disabled peers
- Home school placement
- Extracurricular activities
- Disparate identification

Goals of the Settlement Agreement

- Increase in number of students with ID in regular class placement - 80% or more of school day
- Reduction in disparate identification based on race, ethnicity, gender



Increase in amount of time students with I D spend with non-disabled peers...

- **Academic classes**
- **Recess, lunch**
- **Specials**
- **Field trips**
- **Band, chorus**
- **After school activities**
- **Community based training**



Goals, continued ...

- Increase in percent of students with ID who attend their home school.
- Increase in percent of students with ID who participate in extracurricular activities





How will these goals be addressed?

■ Parents

- training
- information
- support
- involvement on district and school based teams
- parent to parent support



Addressing the Goals

■ School Districts

- Monitoring of data on all five goals for all school districts
- Focused monitoring of LRE data for all school districts
- Action plans for improvement in all districts
- Identification of districts most in need of training and technical assistance
- Identification of spot light programs and success stories in CT



Addressing the Goals

- State wide training initiative by Special Education Resource Center (SERC)
- Facilitation of the School Based Practices Profile in districts
- Coaches Academy and Student Response Team
- Expert Advisory Panel - EAP
- Involvement of plaintiffs in planning, implementing and evaluating strategies
- Annual reporting to the court and plaintiffs for five years

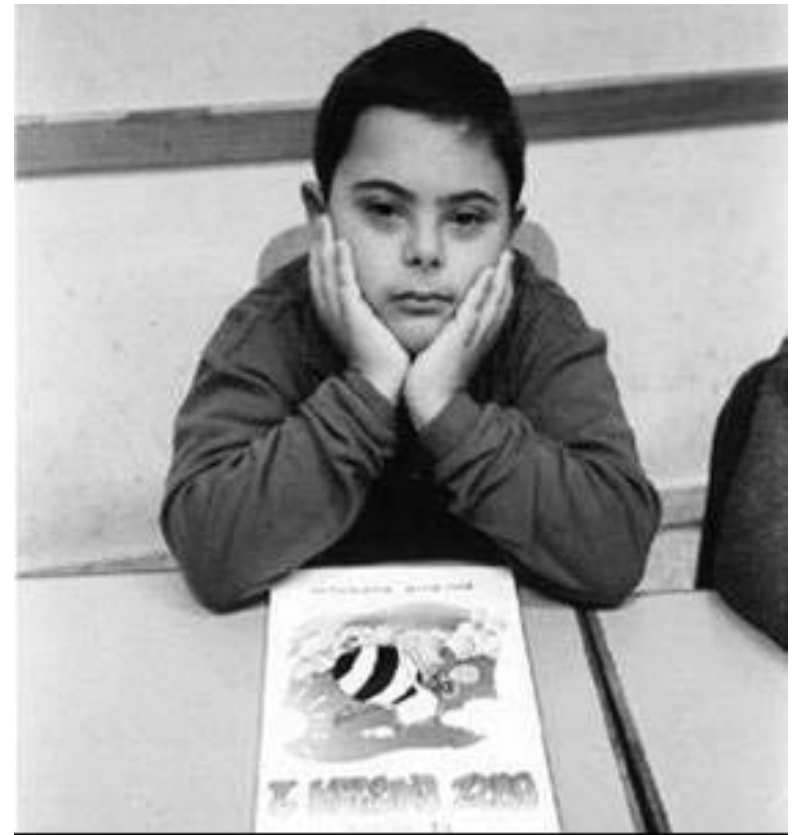
What does research tell us about inclusive education?

Placement in inclusive programs led to academic gains for students with disabilities, including improved performance on standardized tests, mastery of IEP goals, grades, on-task behavior and motivation to learn (National Center for Education Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995).



What does research tell us about inclusive education?

Students with ID educated in inclusive classes test higher on literacy measures than students educated in separate special education classes (Buckley, Bird, Sacks, & Archer, 2000).



What does research tell us about inclusive education?

Placement in inclusive classrooms does not interfere with the academic performance of students without disabilities with respect to the amount of allocated time and engaged instructional time, the rate of interruption to planned activities and students' achievement on test scores and report card grades (York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, and Caughey, 1992).





Where can I learn more?

- State Department of Education
- Special Education Resource Center
- CT Parent Advocacy Center - CPAC
- Arc CT
- CT Coalition for Inclusive Education
- DMR
- State and national websites