

LEADING EFFECTIVE IMPROVEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: FOUNDATIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires public schools to ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services. In conjunction with the continuum, IDEA specifies that students must be offered special education services in the least restrictive environment (or LRE). Ultimately, the goal of special education is to provide support and services to eligible students to enable them to access grade level content and make progress on the goals outlined in their IEP.

Course Description

This course is designed to provide leaders with a foundational understanding of the core components of Special Education and their relationship to ensuring students are served in their least restrictive environment. Coursework includes exploring the implications of a continuum of services on the quality of support provided to students, the development of quality IEP documents, and staffing and scheduling. Participants will be introduced to an action planning resource to guide them through identifying opportunities to refine the continuum of services in their context, determining priority goals and developing an action plan for strategic improvement.

Feedback from ABC Course Participants

"As we move to strengthen our ability to serve diverse learners in inclusive settings across our sites, The Ability Challenge's approach using evidence-based strategies to reinforce practices that educators frequently disregard aligns very well with what we've found works for successful implementation."

-Special Education Director

"I have no doubt that ABC's work will enable us to better meet students' needs and improve outcomes in the long run."

-Early Childhood Principal

Learning Outcomes

Throughout the course, participants will:

- Deepen understanding of current challenges and the importance of strengthening overall quality of support for diverse learners;
- Establish a common understanding of key terms, such as Least Restrictive Environment;
- Deepen knowledge of the relationship between programming, student need, and a free and appropriate public education; and
- Engage in reflection, discussion, and planning to best support student service delivery

Course Components

- Understanding Current Challenges with Special Education
- Foundations of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)
- What is a Free and Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment?
- How Strengthening Special Education Services Can Impact Student Outcomes
- Implications on Schoolwide Scheduling, Staffing, and Support
- Planning for Next Steps