



## Capacity Building & Improvement Effort

# FAPE in the LRE Capacity Building & Improvement Effort Process for Cohort One: Fall 2024

Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education  
June 2024

## Background

According to [guidance](#) issued July 2023 by the Federal Office of Special Education, States must have a reasonably designed general supervision system where each local education agency (LEA) intermediate school district (ISD) is monitored at least one time within a six-year cycle. To be able to effectively monitor all 56 ISDs and four State agencies, which are subrecipients of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) federal flow-through grant, MDE OSE will monitor ISDs and state agencies in cohorts of 10 participants each year. The first cohort will be initiated in the fall of 2024. The specific focus of this 2024-2025 capacity building & improvement effort activity will be the IDEA requirements specific to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (34 CFR §§§§[300.114](#), [300.115](#), [300.116](#), and [300.117](#)).

The entitlement of a [Free Appropriate Public Education \(FAPE\)](#) in the LRE for eligible students with a disability is a key principle of the IDEA. The central activities planned throughout this process will ensure entitlement to the civil rights requirements of IDEA are provided.

Consistent with the state's general supervision responsibilities, the purpose of conducting the FAPE in the LRE capacity building process & improvement effort is to determine the extent to which each subrecipient of the federal IDEA grant has policies, procedures, and practices that are in compliance with the LRE requirements. Each cohort participant will receive a final report issued by MDE OSE after the LRE monitoring process. The report will affirm positive practices being implemented as well as articulate any areas of noncompliance, associated corrective action, and identified areas of system improvement needed to align practices with the requirements of IDEA.

## Pre-Capacity Building & Improvement Effort Activities

The following activities will occur prior to the scheduled onsite visit:

1. MDE OSE will provide a data profile for each cohort participant. This profile will contain charts, graphs, and data to which MDE OSE has access. The data profile will objectively describe the cohort participant in terms of compliance and results. The data profile will also contain a graphic depicting the placement/location of each student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) assigned within the jurisdiction of the cohort participant. The data profile will be used as part of the overall analysis.
2. Each participant of the cohort will be asked to provide a detailed description in response to the following three questions:
  - a. What system is in place at the ISD to ensure everyone within the jurisdiction of the cohort participant knows the LRE requirements of IDEA?
  - b. What system is in place at the ISD to ensure everyone within the jurisdiction of the cohort participant verifies everyone is implementing the requirements correctly?
  - c. What system is in place at the ISD to ensure everyone within the jurisdiction of the cohort participant supports any identified area of improvement needed?
3. Prior to the initiation of the FAPE in the LRE capacity building & improvement effort process, MDE OSE will host a virtual meeting. The meeting will include each of the cohort participants and staff of the MDE OSE. The purpose of the virtual meeting will be:
  - a. to introduce State leaders of the FAPE in the LRE capacity building & improvement effort activities, including the LRE Technical Assistance (TA) Provider that will be assigned to each cohort at the onset of the monitoring cycle. The LRE TA Provider will attend the capacity building & improvement effort activities for each participant of the cohort. This LRE TA Provider will support the cohort for the ensuing five years of the remaining six-year cycle.
  - b. to confirm the schedule of the capacity building dates.
  - c. to review the steps involved in the monitoring process.
  - d. to distribute and provide an overview of the data profile to be used as part of the capacity building discussions.

## Capacity Building & Improvement Effort Activities

The FAPE in the LRE capacity building & improvement effort process is comprised of three separate activities. The three activities are as follows:

1. Student Record Review (SRR)
  - a. Will be completed before the onsite visit.
  - b. The file selection process will include staff from both MDE OSE and the individual cohort participants.
  - c. The activity will be conducted collaboratively with MDE OSE and the individual cohort participants.
  - d. The files selected and the outcome of the review may be, but are not limited to:
    - i. Inform additional or specific interviews to be completed as part of the interview activity.
    - ii. Result in required student level and systemic level identification of non-compliance.
    - iii. Inform additional capacity building & improvement effort activities as appropriate.
    - iv. Correction of identified non-compliance resulting from the SRR will need to be completed within one year.
  - e. Additional policies, procedures, and practices will also be reviewed before the onsite visit.
2. Staff Interviews
  - a. Interviews will be conducted onsite and as much as is reasonable at both the ISD and designated member district locations.
  - b. MDE OSE, in collaboration with individual cohort participants, will determine specific general and special education administrators and providers, including general and special teachers and ancillary service staff, to be interviewed.
  - c. Interview questions are designed to determine the level of awareness and understanding of the IDEA requirements of the public agency to provide and ensure a FAPE in the LRE to eligible students with a disability as well as the role of the public agency in the education of students with disabilities enrolled in their district.

- d. MDE OSE and cohort participants will conduct the interviews with the individual cohort participants.
  - e. The result of the interviews will NOT lead to identified noncompliance. This information will be used to determine future planning and technical assistance needs for improved practices.
3. Parent Focus Group
- a. Conducted onsite at a date and time determined by the ISD and their Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) members, based on the scheduled events of the onsite visit.
  - b. To increase and/or incentivize PAC attendance and participation, the host ISD will be asked to consider:
    - i. Reimbursement options for transportation costs to PAC members
    - ii. Free onsite childcare as needed.
    - iii. Light refreshments (cookies, cheese and crackers, a drink option, etc.)
  - c. Individual cohort participants from the ISD, in collaboration with MDE OSE, will convene a discussion with the ISD's PAC members. ISDs are required to establish and support a PAC as defined in Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education ([R §340.1838](#)).
  - d. A discussion with the PAC members will focus on the LRE requirements. A brief review of the requirements will be shared with the PAC members for clarification. Retractable banners for each requirement containing the specific language from IDEA will be used for this purpose and will remain with the cohort participants for their future use. A one-page Family Matters document will also be shared with the PAC members to provide further clarification on the LRE IDEA requirements.
  - e. The PAC members will be asked to share, based on their experiences and their participation in the IDEA required activities (IEP Team meetings, evaluations, Manifestation Determination Reviews, etc.), relevant issues related to their child's education and the extent to which they have seen the district practices aligned with §300.114-300.117.
  - f. The results of the Parent Focus Group discussion will NOT lead to identified noncompliance. This information will be used to inform further planning and technical assistance needs for improved practices.

## Outcomes of FAPE in the LRE Capacity Building & Improvement Process

There will be three outcomes of this process with noncompliance has been identified:

1. The LRE Technical Assistance (TA) Provider assigned to the cohort at the onset of the capacity building & improvement effort cycle will support the cohort for the ensuing five years of the remaining six-year cycle.
2. All identified student level and systemic noncompliance will need to be corrected one year from the date of identification. This activity will be done consistent with the Catamaran process for addressing, correcting, verification and closing noncompliance.
3. Each participant of the cohort will be required to develop and implement a five-year improvement plan focusing on areas identified in the final report.

### MDE OSE Interview Team

- Teri L. Rink, Director, Office of Special Education
- Rebecca McIntyre, Assistant Director, Office of Special Education
- Jessica Brady, Performance Reporting Supervisor, Office of Special Education
- Chantel Mozden, Program Accountability Supervisor, Office of Special Education
- John Andrejack, Program Finance Manager, Office of Special Education
- Nichole Moore, Performance Reporting Unit, Technical Assistance Coordinator
- Emily Adema, Least Restrictive Environment Technical Assistance Provider
- Ashley Reed, Departmental Analyst, Office of Special Education

### Cohort One Participants and Dates for Onsite Activities

Location	Address	Dates
Copper Country ISD	809 Hecla Street Hancock, MI 49930	September 23-27, 2024
Bay-Arenac ISD	4228 Two Mile Road Bay City, MI 48706	October 21-25, 2024
Wexford-Missaukee ISD	9907 E. 13th Street Cadillac, MI 49601	November 18-22, 2024

Location	Address	Dates
Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)	John Hannah Bldg. Lansing, MI	December 9 & 10, 2024 (Virtual)
Wayne RESA	33500 Van Born Rd. Wayne, MI 48184	January 27-31, 2025
Sanilac ISD	46 N. Jackson St. Sandusky, MI 48471	February 17-21, 2025
Hillsdale ISD	310 West Bacon Street Hillsdale, MI 49242	March 10-14, 2025
Ottawa ISD	13565 Port Sheldon St. Holland, MI 49242	March 31-April 4, 2025
Kent ISD	2930 Knapp Street NE Grand Rapids, MI 49525	May 12-16, 2025
Allegan Area ESA	310 Thomas Street Allegan, MI 49010	May 19-23, 2025

### Timeline of the LRE Process

The activities and timeline for the FAPE in the LRE Capacity Building & Improvement Effort Process for each cohort will be ongoing throughout the six-year cycle.

**Year One:** FAPE in the LRE Capacity Building & Improvement Effort activities are conducted and completed. Identified noncompliance will be managed in the Catamaran system and will need to be completed one year from the date of identification.

**Year Two:** With support from MDE OSE and an MDE OSE LRE TA Provider, each cohort participant will engage in the OSE Data Use & Action Process to develop and begin implementing a five-year improvement plan based on the areas identified in the Report of Findings issued.

**Years Three-Six:** Improvement plan implementation, along with building capacity & improvement effort, the successful implementation, and making any data-driven revisions as needed to ensure improvement.

**Year One:** The FAPE in the LRE Capacity Building & Improvement Effort will be repeated as the second six-year capacity building cycle will begin.