

# Guidelines for Calculating Educational Environment for Federal Special Education Reporting



The purpose of this document is to guide individualized education program (IEP) teams in calculating the Educational Environment in Section VIII of the IEP.



## Importance of Accurate Educational Environment Reporting

Every state is required to provide an annual report of specific data related to the education of students with disabilities to the U.S. Department of Education. In Pennsylvania, this information is gathered through the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS). Data are compiled by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Bureau of Special Education (BSE), verified for accuracy and forwarded to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education within required timelines.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), Pennsylvania's State Performance Plan (SPP), heightened the need for accurate reporting of Educational Environment data. Educational Environment data from each student's individualized education program (IEP) are compiled by the local education agency (LEA) and forwarded to their respective intermediate unit (IU) for verification review, and then reported to the PDE/BSE via the PIMS reporting system. If Educational Environment data are not reported accurately by the IEP team, the LEA data may not reflect an accurate representation of the LEA's Educational Environment. Inaccurate data reporting may result in negative results for the LEA such as adverse reporting on the Special Education Data Reports as not meeting SPP targets, resulting in a possible negative determination status.

## Identifying Environment

Federal **Educational Environments** are defined as the setting in which students are placed for educational services. These federal settings include:

- Regular class
- Resource room
- Residential facility
- Homebound/Instruction conducted in the home
- Self-contained special classroom
- Separate school
- Hospital
- Correctional facility
- Parentally-placed in private school (reported by intermediate units)

Educational Environment reporting is **not** an indication of the amount of special education service that a student with a disability receives; it indicates **where** the student receives services. For example: **Regular school building** - public school operated and under the authority of a public school entity responsible for public school education.

The following are the fundamental principles for reporting educational environments:

- If a student is attending a regular school building with students without disabilities, and receiving instruction, it is a regular classroom.
- If instruction occurs outside the classroom, such as within the school or community where interaction occurs with persons without disabilities, and includes nondisabled peers and community members, it is counted as a regular classroom.
- If a student is educated outside a regular school building for more than 50 percent of the day, is receiving instruction in an Approved Private School, Private, Other Public, Hospital/ Homebound, Correctional, or Out of State Facility, or Instruction Conducted in the Home, it is considered an "other setting."

## Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) Reporting: Educational Environment - Section VIII of the IEP Form

There are two parts to Section VIII of the IEP. Each IEP team must select only one Educational Environment for the student for December 1 Special Education reporting purposes and complete either Section A or Section B. As a reference, approximately 96 percent of students with disabilities in Pennsylvania are educated in regular school buildings with nondisabled peers, as reported in Section A.

When there is more than one educational environment, the LEA will report the environment that is the majority of the student's program.

**VIII. Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) Reporting: Educational Environment**

**(Complete either Section A or B; Select only one Educational Environment)**

To calculate the percentage of time inside the regular school classroom, divide the number of hours the student spends inside the regular school classroom by the total number of hours in the school day (including lunch, recess, and study periods). The result is then multiplied by 100.

**Section A: For Students Educated in Regular School Buildings With Nondisabled Peers** - Indicate the percentage of time **inside** the regular school classroom for this student:

Time spent outside the regular school classroom receiving services unrelated to the student's disability (e.g., time receiving

art services) should be considered time inside the regular school classroom.

Educational time spent in age-appropriate, community-based settings that include individuals with and without disabilities, such as local community college campuses or vocational sites, should be counted as time spent inside the regular school classroom.

Lunch in the cafeteria - Lunch is part of the school day and there are opportunities to interact with students without disabilities, therefore it should be counted as time spent inside the regular school classroom.

Lunch in special education classroom with students with IEPs - Lunch is part of the school day; however, because there are no opportunities to interact with students without disabilities, the student is outside the regular school environment.

**Calculation for This Student:**

Column 1	Column 2	Calculation	Indicate Percentage	Percentage Category
Total hours the student spends in the regular classroom per day	Total hours in a typical school day (including lunch, recess and study periods)	$(\text{Hours inside regular classroom} \div \text{hours in school day}) \times 100 = \%$ $(\text{Column 1} \div \text{Column 2}) \times 100 = \%$	Section A: The percentage of time child spends inside the regular classroom:	Using the calculation result – select the appropriate percentage category
			% of the day	<input type="checkbox"/> INSIDE the regular classroom 80% or more of the day <input type="checkbox"/> INSIDE the regular classroom 79-40% of the day <input type="checkbox"/> INSIDE the regular classroom less than 40% of the day

**Section B:** This section is required **only** for students educated **outside regular** school buildings for more than **50 percent of the day** - Select the appropriate type of educational environment and indicate the **name of the school or facility** on the line next to the educational environment selected. (If a student spends less than **50 percent** of the day in one of these locations, the IEP team must do the calculation in Section A.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Approved Private School (Nonresidential)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved Private School (Residential)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Private Facility (Nonresidential)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Private Facility (Residential)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Public Facility (Nonresidential)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Public Facility (Residential)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital/Homebound	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Correctional Facility	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Out of State Facility	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Instruction Conducted in the Home	_____

**Examples for Section A: How to Calculate Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS)–Educational Environment Percentages**

	Column 1	Column 2	Calculation	Indicate Percentage
	Total hours the student spends in the regular classroom per day	Total hours in a typical school day (including lunch, recess & study periods)	$(\text{Hours inside regular classroom} \div \text{hours in school day}) \times 100 = \%$ $(\text{Column 1} \div \text{Column 2}) \times 100 = \%$	Section A: The percentage of time the student spends inside the regular classroom:
Example	5.5	6.5	$(5.5 \div 6.5) \times 100 = 85\%$	85% of the day (Inside 80% or more of day)
Example	3	5	$(3 \div 5) \times 100 = 60\%$	60% of the day (Inside 79-40% of the day)
Example	1	5	$(1 \div 5) \times 100 = 20\%$	20% of the day (Inside less than 40% of day)

## Examples of Educational Environments: Guidance for IEP Teams

Example	Rationale for Consideration of Environment	How to report this time on the IEP?
Inclusive classroom (e.g., for reading instruction)	An inclusive classroom is a regular education environment in which students with and without disabilities learn together.	Complete Section A.
Regular education classroom in a regular school building all day with 1:1 paraprofessional support provided to student 100% of day	Paraprofessional support is an IEP team decision related to the specially designed instruction that a student needs. It does not impact Educational Environment location where the student receives the services for calculation or reporting.	Complete Section A.
Student receives specialized instruction in a full-time special education classroom in a regular school building, taught by special education teacher	This is special education delivered physically outside of the regular school environment; however, it is located in the regular school building.	Complete Section A.
Speech therapy delivered in separate therapy room in a regular school building	This is special education delivered physically outside of the regular education environment; however, it is located in the regular school building.	Complete Section A.
Integrated speech therapy in a regular school building classroom, provided by speech and language therapist	This is special education delivered inside the regular education environment.	Complete Section A.
Regular education classroom with co-teaching in a regular school building	Co-teaching is an instructional strategy that is provided to all children inside the regular education environment.	Complete Section A.
Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth program in a regular school program - if the students with disabilities and nondisabled peers are educated in the program.	An alternative education environment that includes both students with disabilities and nondisabled students is a regular school environment.	Complete Section A.
Educational time spent in age-appropriate, community-based setting, which includes individuals with and without disabilities (e.g., vocational sites, supermarkets, colleges)	Time spent in community environments with nondisabled peers and community members is a regular school environment.	Complete Section A.
Students engaged in job training in sites within the regular school setting	Training in actual work settings is considered a regular school environment.	Complete Section A.
One-on-one orientation and mobility instruction in halls and stairs of regular school building with vision therapist in a regular school building	Considered a regular school environment.	Complete Section A.
Recess with nondisabled students in a regular school building	Recess is part of the school day and participation alongside nondisabled students is a regular school environment.	Complete Section A.

Examples of Educational Environments: Guidance for IEP Teams continued . . .

Example	Rationale for Consideration of Environment	How to report this time on the IEP?
Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth program outside of the regular school building.	An alternative education environment that includes students with disabilities and nondisabled students outside of the regular school building.	Complete Section B.
Instruction Conducted in the Home	Instruction Conducted in the Home Instruction Conducted in the Home is the most restrictive setting along the special education continuum of services.	Complete Section B.
Correctional facilities	Students are not being educated in a regular school.	Complete Section B. Not applicable to time calculated in regular school buildings.
Instruction with other disabled peers - students attending an educational program "outside" the regular school with no interaction with nondisabled peers	This is a segregated setting.	Complete Section B.
Other locations (e.g., APSs, Public Separate Facilities, Private Separate Facilities)	These settings are not regular school buildings typically.	Complete Section B of the IEP, checking the box denoting one of the choices that includes: Approved Private School (Nonresidential), Approved Private School (Residential), Other Private Facility (Nonresidential), Other Private Facility (Residential), Other Public Facility (Residential), Other Public Facility (Nonresidential), Hospital/Homebound, Correctional Facility, Out of State Facility, Instruction Conducted in the Home. If the student is in this setting less than 50 percent of the time, complete Section A.

Reminder: Section A of the IEP is completed for students educated in regular school buildings with students without disabilities. Statewide, this group represents approximately 96 percent of all students with IEPs. Section B is completed for students educated outside regular school buildings more than 50 percent of the day.

**Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools: Follow the same reporting requirements as all public schools. The LEA is responsible for providing the provisions of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).**

# Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

**Tom Wolf**  
Governor

