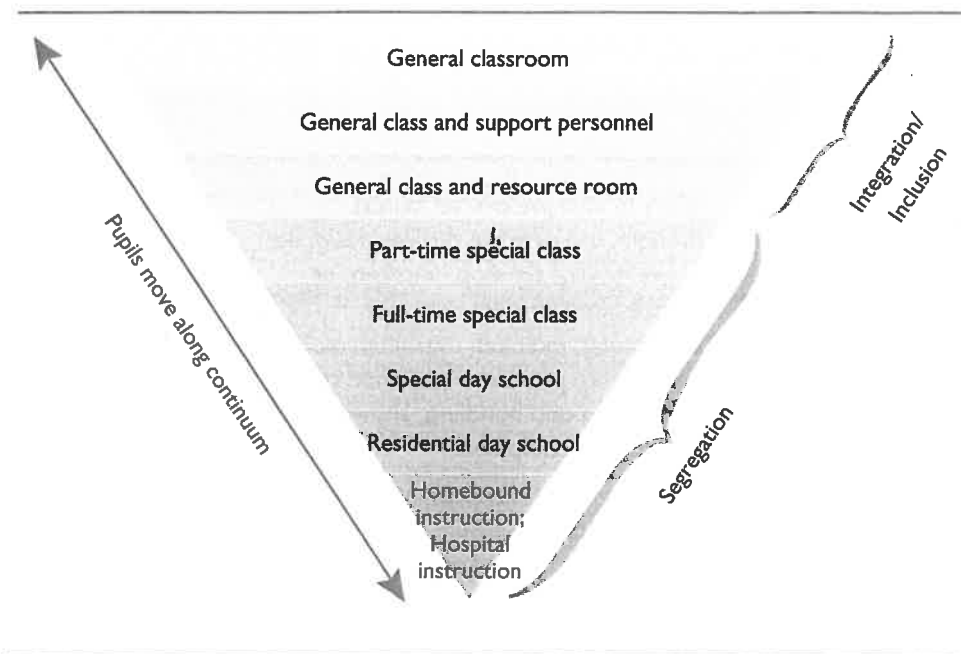


**Figure 1-2**

*Continuum of educational services*



**least restrictive environment**

exceptional within special education. First, a continuum manifests the concept of the **least restrictive environment (LRE)**—the most appropriate placement in which a student can receive instruction and services.

Settings on the continuum involve a series of options that move from contrived to more natural arrangements. The wider the pyramid, the more children are encompassed; throughout are increasingly restrictive environments, with the point of the triangle generally considered to be the most restrictive because it denotes children on homebound instruction who have little opportunity for social interaction with their peers. We discuss the various settings below, moving from the point up to the general classroom.

The continuum also reflects the intensity of a child's needs. With a full continuum of services, educators base placement decisions on potential student outcomes—in which setting the child will succeed and be prepared to become a productive and active citizen. Whether this means receiving educational services in the general classroom; moving out of the classroom for remedial help for short periods of time; or working in a resource room, self-contained class, or even a separate setting must be determined individually.

The type and severity of disability affects placement. While the number of students educated in general classrooms continues to grow steadily, it remains true that children and youth with mild disabilities are more likely to be in general classrooms, and those with more significant disabilities, in special classes, schools, or facilities (Hobbs & Westling, 1998). Students who are deaf-blind, who have multiple disabilities, or who have serious emotional disorders comprise the largest proportions in separate schools (McLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1999).

Finally, the resources needed or available are an integral, if tacit, component of the LRE and the continuum. Lacking appropriate supports, the general classroom may not be able to

classrooms. Pupils receive part of their education in the general classroom and part of it in the resource room. This allows some learning to take place in an environment that is less distracting, less intense, and less competitive than the general milieu. The classroom teacher still carries primary responsibility for program design, but works in close coordination with resource room personnel.

Resource rooms have been described as “an island of learning opportunities” (Vergason & Anderegg, 1993, p. 475). Resource room teachers design, alter, and present instruction across a number of curriculum areas, and address elements that facilitate students’ success in the general environment. They may provide support in academic learning of both the core and remedial curricula, and training in social and communication skills that will help a student to interact better in the general classroom.

### *Inclusion in the General Classroom*

It is the general classroom that provides the student who is exceptional with the least restrictive environment and the opportunity for maximum social integration with normally developing peers. When a child is included, the classroom teacher holds primary responsibility for that child and must ensure that appropriate programs and curriculum adaptations or modifications are made. The classroom teacher also works with a number of professionals to tailor education to the needs of the individual child. An outline of the entire process is shown graphically in Figure 1-3.

**Figure 1-3**  
*Including students  
with special needs*

