

Special Education/

Exceptional Children:

Educational Jargon Glossary & Resources for Parents

Do you ever hear a word (term) or phrase used about your child’s education that you don’t recognize? Find definitions for many of the commonly used educational terms here!

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# Exceptional Children / Special Education

**Acronyms**

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act

ADD - Attention Deficit Disorder

ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

AG - Annual Goal

APE - Adapted Physical Education

ASL - American Sign Language

AT - Assistive Technology

AU - Autism

AYP - Adequate Yearly Progress

BD - Behavior Disorders

BIP - Behavioral Intervention Plan

CD - Cognitive Delay

CHADD - Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

CP - Cerebral Palsy

DB - Deaf-Blindness

DD - Developmental Disability

DPH - Due Process Hearing

DPHO - Due Process Hearing Officer

ED - Emotional Disturbance

EI - Early Intervention

ESY - Extended School Year

FAPE - Free Appropriate Public Education

FBA - Functional Behavior Assessment

FERPA - Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

FM - Focused Monitoring

GS - General Supervision

HI - Hearing Impaired

HIPAA - Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act

HQT - Highly Qualified Teacher

IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEE - Individual Education Evaluation

IEP - Individual Education Program

IFSP - Individual Family Service Plan

IQ - Intelligence Quotient

LA - Lead Agency

LD - Learning Disability

LEA - Local Education Agency

LEP - Limited English Proficiency

LoD - Level of Determination

LRE - Least Restrictive Environment

NCLB(A) - No Child Left Behind Act

OCR - Office for Civil Rights

ODD - Oppositional Defiant Disorder

OHI - Other Health Impaired

OI - Orthopedic Impairment

O&M - Orientation and Mobility

OT - Occupational Therapy

Part B Special Education—School-Aged Children

Part C Special Education—Birth–Two Years Old

PDD - Pervasive Development Disorders

PE - Physical Education

PLAAFP - Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

PT - Physical Therapist

RTI - Responsiveness to Intervention

SA - Self-Assessment

SEA - State Education Agency

SI - Sensory Integration

SL - Speech Language

SLP - Speech Language Pathologist

STO - Short Term Objective

TBI - Traumatic Brain Injury

TDD/TTY - Telecommunications Device for the Deaf

USDE - United States Department of Education

VI - Visual Impairment

VR - Vocational Rehabilitation

**Definitions**

**Accommodations** - Special academic and/or

behavioral adjustments that assist a student to

participate in the general education classroom, also

known as supplemental aids and services.

Accommodations do not change what is being

measured or taught, only the way it is delivered.

(See modifications.)

**Adapted Physical Education (APE)** - A

component of the educational curriculum in which

physical, recreational, and other therapists work

with children who exhibit delays in motor

development and perceptual motor skills. It is a

related service some children might need in

addition to or in place of physical education.

**Adequate Yearly Progress** - The degree of progress

for children in academic areas established by the

State Education Agency.

**Advocate** - An individual who represents or speaks

on behalf of another person’s interests (as in a

parent with his/her child).

**American Sign Language (ASL)** - A method of

communicating by using hand signs. Each sign

represents either one word or a concept that is

typically expressed with several spoken words.

For words that do not have a sign, finger spelling

is used.

**American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**

**(ASHA)** - The national professional association for

speech and language therapists and audiologists.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): A civil

rights law that prohibits discrimination against persons

with disabilities in the areas of accessibility,

employment, public services, public accommodations,

transportation, and communication.

**Aphasia** - A communication disorder characterized

by difficulty with producing language and/or with

under- standing language.

**Assessment** - The gathering of information by

qualified personnel on a child’s development and

on the needs and priorities of the family. This

information about the child and family is used in

planning the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

**Assistive Technology Device (AT)** - Any item,

piece of equipment, or product system, whether

acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or

customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or

improve functional capabilities of individuals with

disabilities. Public schools are required to consider

the assistive technology needs of students with

disabilities.

**Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)** - A

neurobiological disorder. Typically, children with

ADD have developmentally inappropriate behavior,

including poor attention skills and impulsivity.

These characteristics arise in early childhood,

typically before age seven, are chronic, and last at

least six months. Children with ADD may also

experience difficulty in the areas of social skills and

self-esteem.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**

**(ADHD)** - A neurobiological disorder. Typically,

children with ADHD have developmentally

inappropriate behavior, including poor attention skills,

impulsivity, and hyperactivity. These characteristics

arise early in childhood, typically before age seven,

are chronic, and last at least six months. Children

with ADHD may also experience difficulty in the

areas of social skills and self-esteem.

**Autism (AU)** - A developmental disability

significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal

communication and social interaction.

**Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorder** -

Developmental disabilities that share

many of the same characteristics.

Usually evident at age three, autism

and PDD are neurological disorders that

affect a child’s ability to communicate,

understand language, play, and relate

to others.

**Behavioral Assessment (BA)** - Gathering (through

direct observation and by parent report) and

analyzing information about a child’s behavior. The

information may be used to plan ways to help the

child change unwanted behaviors. Observations

include when a behavior occurs as well as the

frequency and duration of the behavior.

**Behavior Disorders (BD)** - A term used by some

States for children who exhibit difficulties with

social interactions and inappropriate behavior that

interferes with learning.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** - A plan that is

put in place to teach a child proper behavior and

social skills. It should be positive in nature, not

punitive.

**Cerebral Palsy (CP)** - A disorder of movement and

posture control resulting from non-progressive

damage to the brain during fetal life, the newborn

period, or early childhood. Both genetic and

acquired factors may be involved. It may be

caused by a lack of normal fetal brain development

or by injury to the brain. The extent and location of

the brain damage determine the type of cerebral

palsy and the associated symptoms.

**Child Find (CF)** - A required federal program that

requires States to actively locate children, birth to

age 21, with developmental disabilities or who are at

risk for developmental disabilities. It particularly

focuses on children not enrolled in school programs.

**Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)** - A national organization that provides information, training and support for individuals interested

and/or impacted by ADD/ADHD.

**Cognitive Delay (CD)** - A disability where a child’s

intellectual and adaptive behavior is below average

and impacts the child’s education.

**Consent** - Written parent permission before initial

evaluation and placement in special education

**Comprehensive Educational Evaluation** - The

evaluations and observations done by the school

staff to find out if the child has a disability and

requires special education and related services.

The school’s multi-disciplinary team is required to

do this evaluation and hold a meeting with the

parent to discuss the results. A parent may choose

to share any evaluation and assessment

information done by the child and family agency or

by other qualified persons.

**Deaf-Blindness** **(DB) -** Concomitant

hearing and visual impairments that cause

severe communication, developmental,

and educational needs.

**Developmental Disability (DD)** - Any physical or

mental condition that begins before the age of 18

years, causes the child to acquire skills at a slower

rate than his/her peers, is expected to continue

indefinitely, and impairs the child’s ability to

function in society.

**Disability** - A substantially limiting physical or

mental impairment that affects basic life activities

such as hearing, seeing, speaking, walking, caring

for oneself, learning, or working.

**Due Process** - A process for resolving a dispute

between the family and the child and family service

agency related to the delivery of early intervention

services. In special education, due process refers

to a process for resolving a dispute between the

family and the public school related to the

identification, evaluation, or placement of a child

with disabilities.

**Due Process Hearing** - A legal proceeding, similar

to a court proceeding where a hearing officer is

presented evidence by disagreeing parties. A

verbatim record is taken of the proceedings, and a

hearing officer writes a decision that may be

appealed to the State education agency, and if

desired, to a civil court.

**Dyslexia** - A learning disability in which the child has

difficulty with reading due to difficulty distinguishing

written symbols. For example, transposing letters and

words such as reading ―top‖ as ―pot.‖

**Dyspraxia** - Difficulty with planning and performing

coordinated movements although there is no apparent

damage to muscles.

**Early Intervention** - Specialized services provided

to infants and toddlers ages birth to three who are at

risk for or are showing signs of developmental delay.

**Emotional Disturbance (ED)** - A condition

exhibiting one or more of the following

characteristics over a long period of time and to a

marked degree that adversely affects educational

performance. A) An inability to learn that cannot be

explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;

B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory

interpersonal relationships with peers and

teachers; C) Inappropriate types of behavior

or feelings under normal circumstances;

D) A tendency to develop general pervasive

mood of unhappiness or depression; or E) A

tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears

associated with personal or school problems.

**Extended School Year (ESY)** - The delivery of

special education and related services during the

summer vacation or other extended periods when

school is not in session. The purpose for ESY is to

prevent a child with a disability from losing previously

learned skills. The IEP team must consider the need

for Extended School Year at each meeting and must

describe those services specifically with goals and

objectives. Not all special education students require

an extended school year. Extended school year

services must be individually developed to meet the

child’s unique needs.

**Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** - A federal law that protects the privacy and transfer of student education records.

**Fidelity** - The unfailing fulfillment of one’s duties

and obligations and strict adherence to vows or

promises. Fidelity means to implement a program

as it was intended; to ensure that all services are

delivered correctly (e.g., that a reading program is

implemented correctly).

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):**

An individualized educational program that is

designed to meet the child’s unique needs and

from which the child receives educational benefit.

**Functional Behaviors** - Behaviors (basic skills,

such as meal-time skills) the child has mastered, or

needs to master, in order to get along as

independently as possible in society.

**Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)** - A

process that examines why a child behaves the

way he or she does given the nature of the child

and what is happening in the environment. It is a

process for collecting data to determine the

possible causes of problem behaviors and to

identify strategies to address the behaviors.

**Head Start** - A federal program started in 1965

aimed at providing a comprehensive preschool

program for children ages three to five from low income

families. Planned activities are designed to

address individual needs and to help children

attain their potential in growth and mental and

physical development before starting school.

**Health Insurance Portability Accountability**

**Act (HIPAA)** - Federal law that outlines the

confidentiality and protection of medical records.

**Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)** - An

evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who

is not employed by the school district responsible

for the education of the child.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** - The federal law that provides the legal authority for early intervention and special educational services for children birth to age 21. Part B outlines services for children ages three to 21. Part C outlines services for children birth to

 age three.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP)** - A

written statement of a child’s current level of

educational performance and an individualized

plan of instruction, including the goals, specific

services to be received, the staff who will carry out

the services, the standards and timelines for

evaluating progress, and the amount and degree to

which the child will participate with typically

developing peers (Inclusion/Least Restrictive

Environment). The IEP is developed by the child’s

parents and the professionals who evaluated the

child and/or are providing the services. It is

required by the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA) for all children eligible for

special education.

**Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)** - The

written document that defines the early intervention

services provided to the child and family. The

program is designed to meet the needs of the child

and the family, and is based on family-identified

priorities.

**Interagency Agreement** - A document signed by

authorized representatives of at least two agencies

outlining mutually agreed upon responsibilities to

perform certain duties under specified conditions.

**Learning Disability (LD)** - A disorder in one or

more of the basic psychological processes involved

in understanding or using spoken or written

language that may manifest itself in an imperfect

ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, or spell or

to do mathematical calculations.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** - The

placement for children with disabilities that is, to the

maximum extent appropriate, including children in

public or private institutions or other care facilities,

where they are educated with children who are not

disabled, and special classes, separate schooling,

or other removal of children with disabilities from

the regular educational environment occurs only

when the nature or severity of the disability of a

child is such that education in regular classes with

the use of supplementary aids and services cannot

be achieved satisfactorily.

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP)** - Children

whose primary language is other than English.

**Local Education Agency (LEA)** - The public

schools operating in accordance with statutes,

regulations, and policies of the State Department of

Education.

**Modifications** - Change or alterations to what is

being measured or taught. Modifications create a

different standard for children whose disabilities

require more intense adjustments. Modifications

are also typically included in the IEP. (See

accommodations.)

**Music Therapy** - A therapeutic service to meet

recreational or educational goals. Music therapy

includes playing instruments, moving to music,

singing, and listening to music. It is used in a

variety of applications in schools, hospitals, and

private settings through both individual and group

approaches, often in conjunction with other types of

therapy. Both music education and music therapy

contribute to special education by promoting

learning and self-growth through enjoyable

activities.

**Natural Environment** - The natural or everyday

settings for your child. These are places where the

child would be if they didn’t have a special

developmental concern. It is where all children

would be (for example, home, childcare, parks,etc.).

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA)** -

Reauthorized in 2001, the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is the principal

federal law affecting education from kindergarten

through high school for children ―at risk.‖ The NCLBA

provides opportunities for children to learn

and progress.

**Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)** - Children

who exhibit defiant and anti-social behaviors over a

long period of time and environment.

**Orientation and Mobility (O&M)** - Services provided

to the blind or visually impaired by qualified personnel

to enable a child to safely move in school and other

environments.

**Orthopedic Impairment (OI)** - Any orthopedic

impairment that adversely affects a child’s

educational performance.

**Other Health Impaired (OHI**) - An educational

classification that describes students who have

chronic or acute health problems that cause limited

strength, vitality, or alertness that adversely affects

a child’s educational performance.

**Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD**) -

Refers to the overall category of Pervasive

Developmental Disorders that includes autism, Rett

Syndrome, Asperger’s syndrome, PDD-NOS, and

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder.

**Part B** - The section of the federal special

education regulations that addresses school-aged

children with disabilities.

**Part C** - The section of the federal special

education regulations that addresses children birth

through two years.

**Physical Education (PE)** - The area of

general education that addresses a

student’s physical development.

**Physical Therapist (PT)** - A professional who is

devoted to improving a person’s physical abilities

through activities that strengthen muscular control and

motor coordination.

**Preschool Special Education** - An educational

program that is designed to meet the unique

developmental needs of an individual child with a

disability who is three, four, or five years of age. It is a

child-focused educational effort. Sometimes referred to

Section 619 of the law.

**Present Levels of Academic Achievement and**

**Functional Performance (PLAFFP)** - Statements

written in the IEP that accurately describe the

student’s strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles.

**Prior Written Notice (PWN)** - Must inform

parents of their rights. It is a form that the

school must use to tell parents why they’re

doing what they’re doing or why they’re not

doing what they’re not doing—they must tell

parents in writing.

**Protection and Advocacy (P&A)** - The

Protection and Advocacy System is a private,

nonprofit organization that protects and promotes

the rights of people with disabilities.

**Related Services -** A service that assists a student

to benefit from special education. Examples are

physical therapy, occupational therapy and school

counseling.

**Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI)** - A general

education process that provides support for students

 academic and behavioral difficulties.

**Screening** - The process of looking at a child’s

development to find out if there are any areas of

concern. It is used to recommend children for more

in-depth evaluation.

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act** - A

federal law that protects the civil rights of

individuals with disabilities. This law is closely

intertwined with IDEA. Children with disabilities

who are not eligible for special education may

qualify for accommodations under Section 504 if

they meet the 504 eligibility criteria.

**Section 619** - Authorizing section of Part

B of IDEA that requires States to

provide preschool services to children

with disabilities, ages three to five.

**Self-stimulation** - Often referred to as stimming,

these are abnormal behaviors, such as head

banging, watching the fingers wiggle, or rocking

side to side, that interfere with the child’s ability to

―sit still‖ and pay attention or to participate in

meaningful activity.

**Sensory Integration Disorder (SID or SI**) - Also

known as Sensory Integration Dysfunction—The

inability to process information received through

the senses, causing problems with learning,

development, and behavior.

**Sensory Integration Treatment (SI)** - A technique

of occupational therapy that provides playful,

meaningful activities that enhance an individual’s

sensory intake and lead to more adaptive functioning

in daily life.

**Short Term Objectives (STO)** - Part of a child’s

IEP that breaks down an annual goal into small

measurable steps. Optional except for students

taking alternate assessments.

**Special Education** - Specialized instruction tailor-made

to fit the unique learning strengths and

needs of students with disabilities. A major goal of

special education is to teach the skills and

knowledge the child needs to be as independent

as possible. Special education programs focus on

academics and also include therapy and other

related services to help the child overcome

difficulties in all areas of development. These

services may be provided in a variety of

educational settings but are required by IDEA to be

delivered in the least restrictive environment.

**Specific Learning Disability (SLD)** - A disorder

that affects the ability to listen, think, speak, read,

spell, or do mathematical calculations.

**Speech and Language (SL) Disorders** -

Problems in communication and related areas such

as oral motor function. These delays and disorders

range from simple sound substitutions to the

inability to understand or use language or use the

oral-motor mechanism for functional speech and

feeding. Some causes of speech and language

disorders include hearing loss, neurological

disorders, brain injury, mental retardation, drug

abuse, physical impairments such as cleft lip or

palate, and vocal abuse or misuse. Frequently,

however, the cause is unknown.

**State Education Agency (SEA)** - The State

Board of Education or other agency responsible for

the State supervision of public elementary and

secondary schools.

**Tactile Defensiveness** - An abnormal sensitivity

to touch indicated by avoidance or rejection of

touching and handling. The child who has tactile

defensiveness may resist touching or being

touched by something that is wet, that is an

unusual texture, or that is an unfamiliar

temperature or pressure.

**Telecommunications Device for the Deaf**

**(TDD/TTY)** - An assistive technology device

attached to a telephone to enable individuals who

are deaf to communicate with others.

Therapy: A treatment for certain physical or

psychological conditions. The most common forms

of therapy provided through early intervention and

special education include occupational therapy,

physical therapy, and speech/ language therapy.

**Transition** - The movement from one service,

location, or program to another. Young children

with disabilities transition at age three from early

intervention to preschool special education

services or to other community settings and

services (early intervention and special education).

Adolescents transition from school to adult

services.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** - Physical damage

to the brain that could result in physical, behavioral,

or mental changes depending on which area of

the brain is injured. TBI could impact a student’s

education; special education services might

be needed.

**Visual Impairment (VI)** - An impairment in vision that,

even with correction, adversely affects a child’s

educational performance.

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** - A program of

rehabilitation through job training focusing on the

participant moving toward gainful employment.

Resources for Parents

**Websites**

Procedural Safeguards: Handbook on Parents’ Rights -

<http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/parent-resources/ecparenthandbook.pdf>

Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities-

<http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/nc-policies-governing-services-for-children-with-disabilities/policies-62010.pdf>

IDEA Information -

<http://idea.ed.gov/>

IDEA Information and Additional Resources -

<http://ectacenter.org/families.asp>

Parental Rights under IDEA -

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/parental-rights>

Information about Special Education Law -

[www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com)

**Local Area (North Carolina) Resources**

[www.ecac-parentcenter.org](http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org)

[www.firstwnc.org](http://www.firstwnc.org)

**Books**

The Complete IEP Guide: How to Advocate for your Special Education Child,

By Attorney Lawrence M. Siegel

From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide,

By Pam and Pete Wright

# References

# Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (2009). An educator and parent primer on special education acronyms, abbreviations, and definitions. Retrieved from <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/documents/sped_advisory_Acronym_Primer.pdf>

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