

SPECIAL EDUCATION TERMINOLOGY

PDF LIST OF TERMS



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Adapted Physical Education (APE): Specially designed physical education program, using accommodations designed to fit the needs of students who require developmental or corrective instruction in PE.

Accommodations: Changes that allow a person with a disability to participate fully in an activity. Examples include, extended time, different test format, and alterations to a classroom.

ADD/ADHD: Attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are medical conditions characterized by a child's inability to focus, while possessing impulsivity, fidgeting and inattention.

Anxiety in Children: Defined as extreme agitation, filled with tension and dread. Anxiety is different than fear. Children with anxiety may or may not qualify for special education. Those who need modifications to their school day can achieve this through a 504 plan.

Assessment or Evaluation: Term used to describe the testing and diagnostic processes leading up to the development of an appropriate IEP for a student with special education needs.

Autism: A brain development disorder characterized by impaired social interaction, communication and by restricted and repetitive behavior. Signs usually begin before a child is 3 years old.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): Special education term used to describe the written plan used to address problem behavior that includes positive behavioral interventions, strategies and support. May include program modifications and supplementary aids and services.

Bipolar Disorders: Characterized by cycles of mania alternating with depression. It is difficult to diagnose children with this disorder and often controversial.

Blindness: Condition defined by lacking visual perception due to physiological or neurological factors.

Cerebral Palsy: A series of motor problems and physical disorders related to brain injury. CP causes uncontrollable reflex movements and muscle tightness and may cause problems in balance and depth perception. Severe cases can result in mental retardation, seizures or vision and hearing problems.

Common Core Standards: A shared set of evidence based national standards developed through state led initiatives. Common Core is designed to have fewer, simplified standards. They were created by the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers. Officials from 48 states participated in the process to develop the standards over several years.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC): A committee whose membership includes parents of school children, school personnel and representatives of the public. This committee advises school administration and local school boards regarding the plan for special education, assists with parent education and promotes public awareness of individuals with special needs.

Complaint Procedure: A formal complaint filed with the County or State Board of Education if a district violates a legal duty or fails to follow a requirement under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (IDEA)

Cumulative File: The records maintained by the local school district for any child enrolled in school. The file may contain evaluations and information about a child's disability and placement. It also contains grades and the results of standardized assessments. Parents have the right to inspect these files at any time.

Deafness: Hearing impairment so severe that a child is impaired in possessing any linguistic information through hearing.

Designated Instruction Services (DIS): Instruction and services not normally provided by regular classes, resource specialist programs or special day classes. They include speech therapy and adaptive physical education.

Differential Standards for Graduation: Standards for graduation that may be modified for students with exceptional needs.

Disability: Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Due Process: Special education term used to describe the process where parents may disagree with the program recommendations of the school district. The notice must be given in writing within 30 days. IDEA provides two methods for resolving disputes, mediation or fair hearing.

Early Intervention: Programs for developmentally delayed infants and toddlers through 35 months of age; designed to help prevent problems as the child matures.

Emotional Disturbance (SED): Term used to describe a diagnosable mental, behavioral or emotional disorder that lasts for a significant duration that meets the criteria within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Extended School Year Services (ESY): An extended school year is a component of special education services for students with unique needs who require services in excess of the regular academic year. Extended year often refers to summer school.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Special education and related services are provided at public expense, without charge to the parents.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): A problem solving process for addressing inappropriate behavior.

Hearing Impairment: Full or partial decrease in the ability to detect or understand sounds.

Home/Hospital Instruction: Students with verified medical conditions, which prevent them from attending school, may receive services on a temporary basis in the home or hospital with a physician's referral.

Inclusion: Term used to describe services that place students with disabilities in general education classrooms with appropriate support services. Student may receive instruction from both a general education teacher and a special education teacher.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004): The original legislation was written in 1975 guaranteeing students with disabilities a free and appropriate public education and the right to be educated with their non-disabled peers. Congress has reauthorized this federal law. The most recent revision occurred in 2004.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): Special education term outlined by IDEA to define the written document that states the disabled child's goals, objectives and services for students receiving special education.

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE): A school district is required by law to conduct assessments for students who may be eligible for special education. If the parent disagrees with the results of a school district's evaluation conducted on their child, they have the right to request an independent educational evaluation. The district must provide parents with information about how to obtain an IEE. An independent educational evaluation means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district. Public expense means the school district pays for the full cost of the evaluation and that it is provided at no cost to the parent.

Individualized Education Program Team: Term used to describe the committee of parents, teachers, administrators and school personnel that provides services to the student. The committee may also include medical professional and other relevant parties. The team reviews assessment results, determines goals and objectives and program placement for the child needing services.

Individualized Family Service Plan: (IFSP) A process of providing early intervention services for children ages 0-3 with special needs. Family based needs are identified and a written plan is developed and reviewed periodically.

Individualized Transition Plan (ITP): This plan starts at age 14 and addresses areas of post-school activities, post secondary education, employment, community experiences and daily living skills.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The placement of a special needs student in a manner promoting the maximum possible interaction with the general school population. Placement options are offered on a continuum including regular classroom with no support services, regular classroom with support services, designated instruction services, special day classes and private special education programs.

Local Education Agency (LEA): Term used to describe a school district participating in a SELPA.

Local Plan: A plan developed by a SELPA and submitted to the State Department of Education for approval. The document outlines the plan for delivery of support services to eligible students living within the geographic boundaries of the plan.

Mainstreaming: Term used to describe the integration of children with special needs into regular classrooms for part of the school day. The remainder of the day is in a special education classroom.

Manifestation Determination: Within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of violation of school code, the IEP team must review all relevant information in the student's file to determine if the conduct in question was caused by the child's disability or if the conduct was a direct result of the school district's failure to implement the child's IEP.

Mental Retardation (now referred to as Intellectually Disabled): This term has recently been changed. This disorder is characterized by below average cognitive functioning in two or more adaptive behaviors with onset before age 18.

Multiple Disabilities: An IEP term used to define a combination of disabilities that causes severe educational needs that require multiple special education programs such as mental retardation with blindness.

Non-public School (NPS) Districts contract with non-public schools when an appropriate placement cannot be found within the scope of the public education setting. Non-public school placement is sought only after efforts to find appropriate placement in public schools have been exhausted.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder(OCD): OCD is an anxiety disorder that presents itself as recurrent, persistent obsessions or compulsions. Obsessions are intrusive ideas, thoughts or images while compulsions are repetitive behaviors or mental acts that the child feels they must perform.

Occupational Therapists: Provide consultation and support to staff to improve a student's educational performance related to fine motor, gross motor and sensory integration development.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD): A child who defies authority by disobeying, talking back, arguing or being hostile in a way that is excessive compared to other children and this pattern continues for more than six months may be determined to have ODD. ODD often occurs with other behavioral problems such as ADHD, learning disabilities and anxiety disorders.

Orthopedic Impairment: Term used to define impairments caused by congenital anomaly, impairments by diseases and impairments by other causes.

Other Health Impaired: Term used to describe limited strength, vitality and alertness that results in limited ability in the educational environment. Impairment could be a result of chronic health problems

such as asthma, attention deficit disorder, epilepsy, heart condition, hemophilia, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever and sickle cell anemia.

Parent Consent: Special education term used by IDEA that states you have been fully informed in your native language or other mode of communication of all the information about the action for which you are giving consent and that you understand and agree in writing to that action.

Physical Therapists: Provide consultation and support to staff to improve a student's educational performance related to functional gross motor development.

Private School: There are new laws regulating the rights of students with disabilities whose parents place them in private schools. When a student is enrolled in private school and has academic difficulties, the school where the student attends needs to inform the parent and the local public school district of the student's difficulties. The district of residence may assess the student to determine if the student qualifies for special education. If they do qualify, the district of residence is responsible for writing an Individualized Education Plan

Residential and Private Placements: Part B of IDEA does not require a school district to pay for the cost of education for your disabled child at a private school or facility if the school district made free appropriate public education available to your child and you chose to place your child in private placement.

Resource Specialists: Provide instructional planning and support and direct services to students who needs have been identified in an IEP and are assigned to general education classrooms for the majority of their school day.

Resource Specialist Program (RSP): Term used to describe a program that provides instruction, materials and support services to students with identified disabilities who are assigned to general classroom for more than 50% of their school day.

School Psychologist: Assist in the identification of intellectual, social and emotional needs of students. They provide consultation and support to families and staff regarding behavior and conditions related to

learning. They plan programs to meet the special needs of children and often serve as a facilitator during an IEP meeting.

Sensory Processing Disorder: A complex brain disorder that causes a child to misinterpret everyday sensory information like movement, sound and touch. Children with SPD may seek out intense sensory experiences or feel overwhelmed with information.

Specific Learning Disability: Special education term used to define a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language spoken or written that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical equations.

Speech and Language Impairments: Communication disorders such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment or voice impairment.

Speech and Language Specialists: Assesses students for possible delayed speech and language skills and provides direct services in the area of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. They are also available regarding hearing impairments and amplification.

SSDI: Social security disability insurance benefits are provided to qualified individuals who cannot engage in substantial gainful work activity because of a disability and who have paid into the system or has a parent who has paid into the Social Security system.

SSI: Supplemental Security Income benefits are provided to qualified individuals who cannot engage in substantial gainful work activity because of a disability and who fall below certain assets and income levels.

Special Day Class (SDC): Term used to describe a self contained special education class which provides services to students with intensive needs that cannot be met by the general education program, RSP or DIS program. Classes consist of more than 50% of the student's day.

State Schools: Most states operate state run residential schools for deaf and blind students.

Student Study Team (SST): A group that evaluates a child's performance, makes recommendations for success and develops a formal plan. The team includes the classroom teacher, parents, and educational specialists. They may make a recommendation for a special education evaluation.

Tourette's Syndrome: Disorder that includes multiple motor and one or more vocal tics, which occur many times per day, nearly daily. If a child has Tourette's syndrome, symptoms tend to appear between the ages of 3-10 years old.

Traumatic Brain Injury: An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment. Applies to open or closed head injuries.

Transition IEP: IDEA mandates that at age 16, the IEP must include a statement about transition including goals for post-secondary activities and the services needed to achieve these goals. This is referred to as an Individual Transition Plan or (ITP).

Turner's Syndrome: This rare genetic disorder affects females and is characterized by the absence of an X chromosome. Characteristics include small stature, limited development of sexual characteristics, low hairline and abnormal eye and bone development.

Visual Impairment: Impairment in vision that even with correction adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Vision Specialists: Provide consultation and support to staff and direct instructional support to students with visual impairments. They provide functional vision assessments and curriculum modifications including Braille, large type and aural media.

Workability Program: These programs focus on preparing high school students with disabilities for successful transition to employment, continuing education and quality adult life with an emphasis on work based learning opportunities.

504 Plan: The 504 Plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the Rehabilitation Act and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment. These accommodations and modifications must ensure that there is no discrimination because of the child's disability.

Accommodations: Curricular adaptations that compensate for learners' weaknesses without modifying the curriculum. Students receiving accommodations read the same material and take the same tests as their peers without disabilities.

Acquisition Deficit: A type of social skills deficit that stems from a lack of knowledge: a child does not understand a skill, and thus cannot master it.

Adaptations: Changes in educational environments that allow students with disabilities to participate in inclusive environments by compensating for learners' weaknesses.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): The measure by which schools, districts and states are held accountable for student performance under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Every state has the freedom to define AYP. All students, including those in special education programs, must demonstrate adequate yearly progress, until 2014 when the law assumes all students have met the standards. It is very likely that the 2014 date and perhaps the notion of Annual Yearly Progress will be significantly changed with the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Source: Education Week <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/adequate-yearly-progress/>

Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD): The name given to the committee used in some states (in other states not using the term ARD, they are called IEP teams or IEP committees) that is responsible for the development and review of a child's individualized education plan (IEP), evaluation and re-evaluation, functional behavioral analysis (FBA), and behavior intervention plan (BIP). The ARD committee meets at least once per year to review the IEP and construct a new plan for the coming year. In addition to the annual review meeting, other meetings can be called by teachers or parents whenever needed. This group is responsible for creating, implementing and maintaining the educational program from students with disabilities, as identified by IDEA.

Annual Review (AR): The yearly meeting of the individualized education program (IEP) team (or called ARD committee in some states). The AR is designed to gather all the IEP team members in one location to update one another on a student's needs and performance by reviewing progress toward goals and looking at new data like work samples and recent testing.

Antecedent Behavioral Consequences Chart (ABC): A tool used to create a record of disruptive behaviors that is utilized as part of functional behavioral assessment (FBA) to help to determine the triggers of and motivations behind these behaviors. ABCs are used to record what happened just before a behavior, a description of the behavior itself and the consequence of the behavior.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): A technique for correcting behavior and social skill deficits in children with special needs. It is based on the understanding that children are more likely to repeat desired behaviors when these behaviors are met with positive reinforcement, and that they are less likely to repeat undesirable behaviors that are not rewarded. One significant part of ABA is discrete trial training (DTT), in which a skill is broken down into its most basic components so that these components may be taught one at a time.

Assessment: Evaluations used to identify a student's strengths, weaknesses and progress. These tests are designed to provide an overview of a child's academic performance, basic cognitive functioning and/or his or her current strengths or weaknesses; they can also test hearing and vision. Assessments can consist of anything from the observations of a teacher or aide to standardized and criterion-referenced tests to complex, multi-stage procedures such as a group of teachers assembling a large portfolio of student work.

Assessment Plan: A written description of the assessments that will be used to evaluate a student's strengths, weaknesses and progress and to determine his or her eligibility for special education services and the types of services that would help that student succeed. In some states the school district is given 15 days to decide which testing services will be used and put that into a plan, while in other states the time frame is not defined. However, IDEA gives only 60 days to complete an evaluation from the time a parent gives permission.

Assistive Technology (AT): Assistive technology is technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. Assistive technology can include mobility devices such as walkers and wheelchairs, as well as hardware, software and peripherals that assist people with disabilities in accessing computers or other information technologies.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication Device (AAC): AAC includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. An AAC device is a tool that uses a non-speech mode of communication to augment spoken language. AAC devices include electronic devices that digitize or synthesize speech and non-electronic communication aids such as manual communication boards.

Sources: ASHA.org <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/AAC/> and NYC Department of Education http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/D75/for_employees/AssistiveTechnology

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A plan that targets one to three of a student's undesirable behaviors with interventions that are linked to the functions of the behavior; each intervention specifically addresses a measurable, clearly-stated targeted behavior. A BIP can include prevention strategies, which

stop the behavior before it begins, as well as replacement behaviors, which achieve the same function as the disruptive behavior without causing disruption.

Behavior Management: Responding to, preventing and de-escalating disruptive behavior.

Behavior Support Plan (BSP): A proactive action plan to address behavior(s) that are impeding learning of a student or of others in his or her classroom.

Source: Positive Environments, Network of Trainers <http://www.pent.ca.gov/beh/bsp/bsp.htm>

Child Find Program: A program, mandated by IDEA, that continuously searches for and evaluates children who may have a disability. Child Find Programs can vary widely from school district to school district.

Classroom Management: The way in which a class is arranged. This involves planning every aspect of a lesson, routines, procedures, interactions and the discipline in the classroom. [LINK to Behavior and Classroom Management-intro]

Collaborative Teaching: A teaching strategy in which two or more teachers work together, sharing responsibilities to help all students succeed in the classroom.

Curriculum-Based Measurements (CBM): Small, regular evaluations used to determine how well a student is learning in various subject areas. CBM can involve checklists or oral questions which the teacher uses to gauge student understanding and skill in a particular curriculum. These measurements are part of the monitoring component of the RTI process.

Cut Point, Cut Scores: Scores on screening tools, usually selected by a school district, that are used to determine whether or not a student needs additional testing or intervention.

Data-Based Decisions: A component of the RTI process that involves using information collected through the screening process to determine the intensity and duration of the needed intervention.

Deaf-Blindness (DB): Simultaneous hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be

accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Deaf-Hard of Hearing (DOHH): See Deafness and/or Hearing Impairment.

Deafness: A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.

Developmental and Social History: A narrative assessment formulated by a child's classroom teacher, parents, pediatrician and school specialists, focusing on issues such as the child's health history, developmental milestones, genetic factors, friendships, family relationships, hobbies, behavioral issues and academic performance. A developmental and social history is a common element of an assessment plan.

Developmental Delay (DD): A delay in one or more of the following areas of childhood development: cognitive development, physical development (including vision and hearing), communication development, social and/or emotional development and adaptive development (including eating skills, dressing and toileting skills and other areas of personal responsibility).

Source: Indiana Family and Social Services Administration <http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/3382.htm>

Developmental Milestones: A set of functional skills or age-specific tasks that most children can do at a certain age range.

Source: University of Michigan Health System
<http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/devmile.htm>

Direct Assessment: A component of functional behavioral assessment (FBA) that involves recording objective information about a student's disruptive behavior. This can entail using a scatter plot form to show the behavior's frequency and time of day, as well as using an antecedent-behavioral-consequences chart (ABC).

Discrete Trial Training (DTT): A part of applied behavioral analysis (ABA) in which a skill is broken down into its most basic components so that these components may be taught one at a time.

Early Intervention (EI): Services for at-risk children from birth to their third birthdays, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). [[LINK to Early Intervention – IDEA Part C](#)]

Emotional Disturbance (ED): A mental health issue including, but not limited to, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder (sometimes called manic-depression), conduct disorders, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and psychotic disorders.

Emotional or Behavioral Disturbance (EBD): A condition exhibiting one or more specific emotional and/or behavioral difficulties over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance.

Fluency Deficit: A type of instructional deficit in which a child needs to practice a skill or receive coaching in order to use a skill effectively. An example is a reading fluency deficit, where the child cannot read smoothly or does so at too slow a rate.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): The education to which every student is entitled under IDEA. Every student is entitled to an education that is appropriate for his or her unique needs and that is provided free of charge.

Functional Behavior Analysis (FBA): A process which describes a student's disruptive behaviors, looks for the reasons behind the behaviors and offers interventions that teach new behaviors to replace the undesired ones.

Group Intelligence Tests: Tests, often administered in the general education classroom, that measure academic ability as well as a child's cognitive level. It is through these types of tests that a teacher might first suspect that a student has a learning disability.

Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT): An initiative of the No Child Left Behind Act, the federal definition of a highly qualified teacher is one who meets all of the following criteria: Fully certified and/or licensed by the state; holds at least a bachelor degree from a four-year institution; demonstrates competence in each core academic subject area in which the teacher teaches. The term highly qualified is not always synonymous with state certification.

Inclusion, Inclusive Classroom: The term inclusion communicates an all-embracing societal ideology. Regarding individuals with disabilities and special education, inclusion secures opportunities for students with disabilities to learn inside mainstream classrooms. Mainstream classrooms in which students with disabilities learn are known as inclusive classrooms.

Indirect Assessment: A component of functional behavioral assessment (FBA) that involves interviewing teachers, parents and other adults who have contact with a student, asking questions about that student's disruptive behavior and when and where it occurs.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A legal document that defines special education services between the school district and the parents.

IEP Team: The team of qualified professionals made up of the parent, special education teacher, interpreter of test data, district representative, and general education teacher at a minimum. This group makes all decisions related to the instructional program of a child with special needs, including placement and services provided. In some states this team is called the admission, review and dismissal (ARD) team.

Individual Intelligence Tests: Intelligence tests that are administered to a student one on one. These tests are often part of the assessment process. Two common individual intelligence tests are the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale.

Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP): A written treatment plan that maps out the early intervention services a child (age birth to his/her third birthday) will receive, as well as how and when these services will be administered. It details a child's current levels of functioning, specific needs and goals for treatment (referred to as outcomes).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): A law that guarantees educational rights to all students with disabilities and makes it illegal for school districts to refuse to educate a student based on his or her disability.

Informed Consent: The signed consent of a parent that describes what the parent is consenting to; informed consent must be obtained before a district assesses, makes a major revision to a child's program, continues, or stops service for a child's disability.

Intellectual Disability (ID): Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing simultaneously with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. ID has been referred to as "Mental Retardation" (MR) in the past, and the term and its acronym may be used colloquially or on older documentation. (The federal government has passed legislation changing this term, but the legislation gave the states no deadline for changing the term in state laws/documents. Most states have already changed the term.)

It is not, however, a currently accepted practice to refer to individuals with intellectual disabilities as mentally retarded.

Interventions: Sets of teaching procedures used by educators to help students who are struggling with a skill or lesson succeed in the classroom.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The environment in which students with disabilities must be educated, as mandated by The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Students with disabilities must be educated in a classroom setting that is as close to the general education setting as possible.

Modifications: Curricular adaptations that compensate for learners' weaknesses by changing or lowering expectations or standards.

Monitoring: A component of the RTI process that involves assessing, keeping accurate records of and monitoring student progress, responsiveness to instruction and intervention. The term is also used for a state's evaluation of each district's compliance with mandates of IDEA and state special education code.

Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET or MDT): The name used for the group of trained professionals that conduct eligibility and review assessments. These members are often the same as the IEP Team, but the law does not define a MET or MDT, simply calls them a group of qualified professionals.

Multiple Disabilities: Simultaneous impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness. [[LINK to Multiple Disabilities](#)]

Multiple Intelligences Theory: A theory which outlines students' varied approaches for processing information (known as "intelligences") and how teachers can access these pathways.

Native Language: The first language of an individual. A school district is required to evaluate a student in his or her native language, or document proficiency in English, before they can identify that student as having a disability and provide special education services. In addition, parents must be offered evaluation plans and individualized education plans (IEPs) in their native language before giving informed consent.

Natural Environment: An educational setting that is comparable to the setting provided to children without disabilities.

Observational Records: Information about a child's academic performance provided by anyone who works with a child. Observational records are a common element of an assessment plan.

Occupational Therapist (OT): A professional who treats patients with injuries, illnesses or disabilities through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. They help these patients develop, recover and improve the skills needed for daily living and working.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/occupational-therapists.htm>

Orthopedic Impairment (OI): Physical disabilities which could affect the academic process.

Outcomes: Short-term goals that are a critical component of an individualized family service plan (IFSP). They must be relevant, specific and measurable.

Performance Deficit: A social or academic skills deficit in which a student understands a particular skill, but fails to implement it consistently.

Performance-Based Tests: Evaluations, such as the Woodcock Johnson, Third Edition (WJIII) or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT), that are used to help determine a child's eligibility for special education services.

Physical Therapist (PT): Professionals who help people who have injuries or illnesses improve their movement and manage their pain. They are often an important part of rehabilitation and treatment of patients with chronic conditions or injuries.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS): A type of augmentative alternative communication (AAC) originally developed for children with autism. The primary purpose of PECS is to teach individuals with autism to initiate communication. Individuals are taught to initiate by handing a picture to a communication partner in exchange for a desired item.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS): An approach to eliminate challenging behaviors and replace them with pro-social skills.

Present Levels: A component of an individualized education program (IEP) that defines a student's strengths and weaknesses, current levels of academic achievement, and current levels of functional performance. Before 2004 this part of the IEP was called present levels of performance; the current term is present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAPF).

Professional Learning Community (PLC): A group of professionals that review data, create needed interventions and make decisions, with the goal of helping students learn and achieve. While the exact definition of a PLC can vary from school to school, in general, the PLC serves the entire school and members collaborate to analyze data and support student learning.

Response to Intervention (RTI): A process used by educators to help students who are struggling with a skill or lesson. If a child does not respond to the initial interventions, more focused interventions are used to help the child master the skill. RTI strategies address both learning and behavior.

Scatter Plot: A form used in direct assessment to record disruptive behavior and show the behavior's frequency and the time of day at which it occurs.

Skill Evaluation: Diagnostic measures for determining a child's gross motor skills, fine manipulative skills and hearing, sight, speech and language abilities, administered by specialists such as a school speech pathologist or general practitioner. A skills evaluation is a common element of an assessment plan.

Special Education (SPED): Term used in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that is defined as specially designed instruction to increase the student's chances for success.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD): A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations. Specific learning disabilities include conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/links/learndisability.html>

Speech or Language Impairment (SLI): A communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP): Also known as a speech therapist, a professional who diagnoses and treats communication and swallowing disorders.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/speech-language-pathologists.htm>

Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale (derived from the Binet-Simon Test): A norm-referenced individual intelligence test, administered by the school psychologist or special education team. The questions are designed to help educators differentiate between students performing below grade level because of cognitive disabilities and those who do so for other reasons.

"Stay Put" Law: A law which states that a parent can request that a child remain in his or her current educational placement while an IEP or offer of FAPE is in dispute.

Student Baseline: A student's starting point, determined by data collected through universal screening tools. A student's baseline is used to measure his or her progress throughout the year.

Student Study Team (SST): A more common term is Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET or MDT). It is a team comprised of the school psychologist, parents and the school's special education team that meets when a child continues to struggle after attempts have been made to remedy problems without special education services. The SST or MET decides if the student should be evaluated, or if he or she will continue without special education services.

Transition/Transition Plan: Transition is a general term used to describe a change in a student's school or program. A transition plan is specific to an IEP: a student who will turn 16 within the life of his or her individualized education program must have a transition goal and plan that outlines how he or she will transition to life beyond high school.

Transition Meeting: A meeting of the individualized education program (IEP) team prior to a student moving into a new program or school.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability and/or psychosocial impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Triennial Review (Tri): An IEP review meeting that takes place every three years. During this meeting, the IEP team meets to discuss a student's continuing eligibility for special education services. It is often combined with the IEP annual review (AR).

Universal Design: An approach that makes a curriculum accessible to all students, regardless of their backgrounds, learning styles and abilities.

Universal Screening Tool: A test that can correctly identify students who are struggling with grade-level concepts or skills. A universal screening tool is used as part of the RTI process.

Visual Impairment (VI): An impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC): An individual intelligence test, usually administered by the school psychologist, which measures a student's intelligence in a variety of areas, including linguistic and spatial intelligence. This is a norm-referenced test, meaning that it has statistical validity and reliability for what it states it measures.

Widening Gap: The gap between what a child with a disability knows and what his or her peers know, which widens as he or she advances to higher grades.

Woodcock Johnson, Third Edition (WJIII): A performance-based test commonly used to help to determine a student's eligibility for special education services.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The term 'individualized education program' or 'IEP' refers to a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with federal law. The IEP guides a special education student's learning. It is created for children between the ages of 3 and 22. It describes the amount of time that the child will spend receiving special education services, any related services the child will receive, and academic/behavioral expectations.

Student Support Team (SST)

Each school has a core group of professionals that leads the work around all areas of student support in the building. This group of core professionals is known as the Student Support Team. The group includes, but is not limited to, administrators, guidance counselors, mental health professionals, nurses, math and literacy coaches, and attendance counselors.

As individuals, these professionals serve as resources for teachers and suggest targeted strategies and interventions in their area of expertise. As a group, they meet regularly to collaborate and address more complex cases of individual children who require targeted support.

Non-public school

A non-public school is an educational program that is run by a private person or group instead of by a government body. In terms of special education, a non-public school may be considered as the appropriate location to serve a student when a public school is unable to serve that student's needs.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

An FBA is a process used for students who have behavioral or emotional problems that are believed to be interfering with their educational progress or the progress of other students. During this process, the child's IEP team identifies specific challenging behavior, the purpose of that behavior, and whether the behavior is interfering with the child's educational progress.

The FBA leads to the development of a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) plan to teach acceptable alternative behavior. The BIP focuses on teaching new behaviors and skills, but also can require:

Modification of the school or classroom environment and activities;

Adaptation of curriculum and instructional delivery; and

Changes to the teacher-student relationship that has been promoting undesirable behavior.

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)

An independent educational evaluation is an evaluation of a child that is done by a qualified examiner who does not work for DCPS. According to IDEA, parents have the right to an IEE administered at public expense when a parent disputes the results of the school's evaluation.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Children with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment that can meet their needs. This means that children with disabilities must be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent that is appropriate for their needs and abilities.

Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education is the state education agency for the District. As a result, OSSE sets statewide policies, provides resources and support, and ensures accountability for all public education in the District.

Prior Written Notice (PWN)

According to IDEA, parents must be notified in their native language before a school district makes or denies any changes to a child's IEP. This includes before a child is evaluated, moved to or out of non-public placement and before changes in services are made. The purpose of this notice is to give parents an opportunity to respond to the proposed changes before they occur.

Department on Disability Services (DDS)

The DC Department on Disability Services, provides services to adults whose disabilities are a barrier to finding and maintaining competitive employment. In partnership with DCPS, DDS can begin working with DCPS students as early as age 14 to begin the process of determining whether their disability will be a barrier to finding and maintaining competitive employment.

Learn more about DDS.

Related Service Provider (RSP)

To learn more about the related services team and the services they provide, please visit the related services web section.

Special Education Coordinator (SEC), IEP Case Manager or Local Education Agency (LEA) Representative

The point of contact for all special education matters at a DCPS school. SECs, LEA Reps and IEP case managers are responsible for identifying children who may have a disability and for organizing all meetings related to special education. At some DCPS schools, a child's teacher serves as his or her IEP case manager.

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

Students in grades 3–8 and students enrolled in Algebra I, Geometry, and English I & II will take the PARCC test. The PARCC test assesses what your child is learning in school and helps teachers and parents know if students are on track for success in college and careers.

Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)

The Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) is a comprehensive assessment system designed to promote increasing higher academic outcomes for students with significant cognitive disabilities in preparation for a broader array of post-secondary outcomes.

MSAA in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics is required for students in grades 3-8 and 11, who qualify for the alternate assessment. MSAA is primarily administered online, with built-in supports to help students respond independently. Depending on students' individual needs, some students will interact directly with the computer while others will interact with printed materials prepared by the test administrator.

504 Plan: a written plan for individuals with disabilities qualifying under the US Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that documents necessary accommodations or services.

accommodations: services or supports used to enable a student to fully access the subject matter and instruction. An accommodation does not alter the content or expectation; instead it is an adjustment to instructional methods. Accommodations should be specified in a student's IEP or 504 Plan. Examples include books on tape, content enhancements, and allowing additional time to take a test.

active listening: a process of hearing what is being said and understanding the message that is being sent. It is a helpful tool when interacting with others. It means making eye contact, acknowledging what is said, and being able to paraphrase back to the speaker the content of the message and his or her feelings.

adaptations: modifications of the delivery of instruction or materials used with a student.

adaptive behavior: a collection of skills learned in order to function in everyday life.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act): Federal legislation that gives Civil Rights protection to individuals with disabilities; enacted into law July 1990.

adequate yearly progress (AYP): as specified in No Child Left Behind, all children need to test as proficient on state test of math, reading, and science by the year 2014. In the meantime, the gains the school must make between now and 2014 are broken up into equal increments for each group and measured accordingly. These groups are (1) school as a whole, (2) children with disabilities, (3) children learning English, (4) minority children, and (5) children from low-income families.

administrative review: a way of resolving special education issues by having supervisory personnel within the local school district or state review what has been done by the MDT.

adverse educational impact: in order to qualify for special education services, a student must have a disability that interferes with some aspect of learning.

advocate: a person who has a high degree of skill and knowledge about education and gives expert advice about this field for the purpose of supporting children.

alternative assessment: measures student performance on alternate achievement standards or for a functional life skills curriculum.

antecedent: something that comes before, precedes, or causes a behavior.

assessment: a collecting and bringing together of information about a child's learning needs; a process using formal and informal methods to determine an individual's strengths and weaknesses to plan, for example, his or her educational services.

assistive technology: an item, piece of equipment, or product system purchased commercially, modified or customized and used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of students with disabilities; also, services that assist students in selecting, acquiring, and using devices.

child find: the responsibility of the school district to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities in their jurisdiction.

compensatory education: services determined to be necessary by the MDT as a result of failure of the school district to adequately implement the child's IEP.

consultant: person who gives expert or professional advice.

criterion referenced tests: assessment that compares a person's performance to some specific established level (the criterion) or a specific degree of mastery; his or her performance is not compared with that of other people.

curriculum-based measurement: an informal assessment approach emphasizing repeated direct measurement of student performance.

differentiation: a way of thinking about and planning in order to meet the diverse needs of students based on their characteristics; teachers differentiate content, process, and product according to students' readiness, interest, and learning profiles through a range of instructional and management strategies.

disability: a documented conditions that results in restricted capability to perform a function of daily life; a disability is not a handicapping condition unless the individual with a disability must function in a particular activity that is impeded by his or her limitation.

dispute process: procedure to resolve disputes between parents and schools.

due process hearing: formal legal proceeding presided over by an impartial public official who listens to both sides of the dispute and renders a decision based upon the law.

eligibility: the process of qualifying for a service under one of the federally defined disability categories; a MDT meeting that considers that qualification.

enduring understandings: the big ideas, or the important understandings, that we want students to "get inside of" and retain after they've forgotten many of the details. Put differently, the enduring understandings provide a larger purpose for learning the targeted content. They implicitly answer the question, "Why is this topic worth studying?"

evaluation: to examine, judge, and analyze the data collected through the assessment process.

expert: person with a high degree of skill in or knowledge of a certain subject; having, involving, or demonstrating great skills, dexterity, or knowledge as the result of experience or training.

FAPE (free appropriate public education): the guaranteed right of children with disabilities to receive an education that meets their unique needs at no cost to parents.

FBA (functional behavior assessment): a systematic data-collection procedure conducted by the MDT, exploring the functions or reasons for students' interfering behaviors.

general education: a standard curriculum adopted by the state or local school district for all children from preschool to high school; the setting where this instruction routinely takes place.

highly qualified: related to the teacher certifications requirements mandated by federal and state laws beginning in 2005.

identification: the process of locating and identifying children needing special services.

inclusion: the idea or philosophy related to students with disabilities participating and being educated in the general education classroom/program to the extent possible.

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE): Federal law defines an IEE broadly as "an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the public agency responsible for the education of the child in question " (IDEA, 2006, section 300.503); it is provided either at parent expense or at public expense as a result of a parent's request or a due process hearing decision.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): a legal document designed by a team of educators, specialists, and the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) for students eligible as described in IDEA 2004; has many required sections, specifying many aspects of a disabled child's education.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA): first enacted in 1975 as the Education for all Handicapped Children Act, and subsequently periodically reauthorized, it is a comprehensive federally funded law that governs the education of students with disabilities.

intelligence quotient: a standard score derived from psychological testing typically used to describe cognitive ability.

informed consent: signed parental agreement to an action proposed by the district after the parent is provided full information in a way he or she can understand.

interfering behavior: a child's behavior that gets in the way of his or her ability to access curriculum and/or participate in the classroom.

interim alternative educational setting (IAES): a setting, other than the student's current placement, that may be considered by the MDT as a result of disciplinary infractions, in which the child will continue to be educated and progress toward IEP goals.

intervention: action taken to correct, remediate, or prevent identified or potential educational, medical, or developmental problems.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): refers to the concept that children with disabilities should be educated to the maximum extent possible with children who are not disabled while meeting all their learning needs and physical requirements; the type of setting is stipulated in a child's IEP; LRE is an individual determination, where what is right for one student is not necessarily right for another.

local education agency (LEA): a school district, board of education, or other public authority under the supervision of a state educational agency having administrative control and direction of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or political subdivision in a state.

mainstream: the placement of a student with a disability into a general education classroom or any nonacademic setting (such as physical education, lunch, etc.) for any part of the school day.

manifestation determination: a process as a result of disciplinary actions that constitutes a change of placement whereby the MDT considers the relationship between the student's disability and the conduct in question and may adjust the disciplinary action, as well as the student's IEP, accordingly.

mastery criteria/mastery level: the cutoff score on a criterion-referenced test; the condition for mastery of an IEP goal.

meaningful progress: improvement in student performance individually determined to be sufficient to indicate that FAPE is being provided.

modification: changes to curriculum demand or assessment criteria such that the curriculum demand or assessment criteria are altered.

multidisciplinary team (MDT): a group including parents and professionals with different areas of expertise who come together for the purpose of looking at an individual child's educational program.

multiple intelligences: educational theory put forth by psychologist, Howard Gardner, which suggests that an array of different kinds of "intelligence" exists in human beings including: Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Visual-Spatial, Musical, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalistic.

No Child Left Behind: a United States federal law that aims to increase the standards of accountability for states, school districts, and schools, as well as provide parents more flexibility in choosing which schools their children will attend.

parent: a natural, adoptive, or foster parent; a guardian or individual acting in place of a natural or adoptive parent with whom the child lives or who is legally responsible for the child's welfare; a required member of the MDT team.

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLOP): a statement in the IEP of the child's current baseline of strengths and needs as measured by formal and informal evaluations.

Prior Written Notice: required written notice to parents when the school proposes to initiate or change, or refuses to initiate or change, the identifications, evaluation, or educational placement of the child.

procedural safeguards: rights regarding the special education of students who are either identified with a disability or suspected of having a disability; a booklet containing certain aspects of these rights required to be provided to parents once each year, as well as upon referral for special education, filing of a complaint, or upon parent request.

referral: a written request for evaluation or eligibility for special education and related services.

related services: services that are developmental, corrective, and other services required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education.

Response to Intervention (RTI): a process for increasing and/or changing supports, instruction, and interventions to address students' needs; under IDEA 2004, one of the preferred methods for identifying specific learning disabilities. For more information, visit the National Center on Response to Intervention website.

scientifically based: refers to the requirements in NCLB and IDEA 2004 that intervention to the greatest extent possible employs systematic methods of data analysis that are accepted by peer-reviewed journals or approved by a panel of independent experts.

screening: the process of administering global methods to determine if the child has a suspected disability and whether the child should have evaluations to determine if he qualifies for special education services and/or related services.

special education: specialized instruction specifically designed to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability, including classroom instructions, instruction in physical education, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions.

standardized tests: tests where the administration, scoring, and interpretations are set or prescribed and must be strictly followed; scores resulting from these tests are based on a normed population and compare students to their same-age peers.

stay put: commonly refers to the student remaining in his current educational setting while the due process complaint is being resolved, although there are important exceptions to this legal distinction.

supplementary aides and services: supports that are provided in the classroom, extracurricular, and nonacademic settings to allow a student with a disability to be educated with his nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate; when possible these supports should be scientifically based.

transition services: a coordinated set of activities including special education and related services and community participation as listed in the IEP that facilitate the student's move to postsecondary options; may include vocational assessment, career exploration, and vocational education.