

Glossary of Special Education Terms

Adaptive Behavior: Refers to one's ability to be socially appropriate and personally responsible. This includes, for example, communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work.

Adapted Physical Education: Involves modifications and/or accommodations to the regular physical education class. Supplemental instruction may take place in a separate class based on a student's individual needs. The goal is to allow students with special needs to remain in the regular physical education class.

Annual Goals: Educational performance to be achieved by a student within one year.

Annual Review: Students with disabilities are required by law to have an educational program that is reviewed each year. A review involves an updating of the student's progress and planning his/her educational program.

Assistive Technology: Services and equipment that enhance the ability of students to be more efficient and successful.

Assistive Technology Device: 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 a child with a disability.

Audiologist: Specialist who is concerned with studying the nature of hearing, administering hearing tests to detect possible hearing loss, and giving information about hearing aids, training programs, and medical treatment.

Autism: Developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in IDEA.

Behavior Modification: Technique of changing human behavior, based on a system of positive and negative reinforcement. Emphasis is on observable behaviors and what events precede and follow them.

Benchmark: Refers to a major milestone that will enable parents, students, and educators to monitor progress during the year.

Building Level Support Teams (BLST): Provide a process for school building teams to analyze needs and clarify school support systems for teachers, students, and parents.

Cerebral Palsy (CP): Group of conditions caused by brain damage usually occurring before or during birth or during the developmental years. Marked especially by impaired muscle control, language, speech, psychological, or learning problems. There are many types of cerebral palsy, and it expresses itself differently in each person.

Confidentiality: Precautions an individual other than the student's parent must take in not revealing information, without consent, about a specific student, to someone who is not directly involved with that student.

Consent: (1) Fully informing the parent of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought, in his or her native language, or other mode of communication, (2) The parent understands and agrees in writing to the carrying out of the activity for which his or her consent is sought, and the consent describes that activity and lists the records (if any) that will be released and to whom, and (3) The parent understands that the granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent and may be revoked at any time.

Day: (1) Business Day referring to Monday through Friday, except for Federal and State holidays (unless holidays are specifically included in the designation of business day). (2) School Day referring to any day, including a partial day, that children are in attendance at school for instructional purposes. The term "school day" has the same meaning for all children in school, including children with and without disabilities.

Deaf: Hearing impairment so severe that the student is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects educational performance.

Deaf-Blind: Concomitant hearing and visual impairment, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational problems that students cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for deaf or blind students.

Due Process Hearing: Formal procedure for reviewing disagreements to ensure that an individual is given an opportunity to present his/her side to an independent due process hearing officer.

Educational Surrogate Parent: Person assigned to act in place of parents or guardians when a student's parents or guardians are not known or are unavailable, or when a student is a ward of the state. This person functions in the same way a parent or guardian would.

Emotionally Disturbed (ED): 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; (1) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or other health factors; (2) an inability to learn to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (3) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (4) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or (5) a tendency to develop symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. This does not include students who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are emotionally disturbed.

Extended School Year/Day (ESY): Purpose is to prevent serious regression of previously learned skills that cannot be regained in a reasonable length of time with the intent being to maintain IEP goals and objectives, not to introduce new skills.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Special education and related services provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, without charge. The free appropriate public education meets the standards of the state educational agency including preschool, elementary, or secondary school education and is provided in conformity with an individualized education program requirement of IDEA.

Guardian: Person who has qualified as a guardian of a minor or incapacitated person pursuant to testamentary or court appointment, but excludes one who is merely a guardian ad litem.

Hard of Hearing: Hearing impairment, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a student's educational performance but which is not included under the definition of deaf.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): Written document, for a student with disabilities, that is developed and implemented to meet unique educational needs.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Describes procedures that ensure, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who are not disabled.

Notice: Mandatory written notice provided to parents before the school's proposal or refusal to initiate or change the student's identification, evaluation, or educational placement. Notice in the parent's native language must also be provided in advance of any scheduled IEP meetings.

Occupational Therapy (OT): Use of purposeful activity with individuals who are limited by physical injury or illness, psychosocial dysfunction, developmental or learning disabilities, poverty and cultural differences, or the aging process with purpose being to maximize independence, prevent disability, and maintain health. The therapy encompasses evaluation, treatment, and consultation.

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Services: Services provided to students who are blind or visually impaired to enable them to attain systematic orientation to, and safe movement within, their environments.

Orthopedically Impaired (OI): Severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance. Includes impairments caused by congenital abnormalities (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contracture).

Other Health Impaired (OHI): Includes limited strength, vitality or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia or diabetes that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

Parent: Natural or adoptive parent; a guardian, but not the State if the child is a ward of the State; a person acting in the place of a parent (e.g., a grandparent or step-parent with whom the child lives, or a person legally responsible for the child's welfare); or an educational surrogate parent.

Physical Therapy (PT): The art and science of a health specialty concerned with the prevention of disability and the physical rehabilitation for congenital or acquired disabilities resulting from, or secondary to, injury or disease. The practice of physical therapy means the practice of the health specialty, and encompasses physical therapy evaluation, treatment planning, instruction, and consultative services.

Procedural Safeguards: Precautions taken to insure that an individual's rights are not denied without due process of law.

Psychologist: Person with an advanced degree who specializes in administering and evaluating psychological tests including intelligence, aptitude, and interest tests. A psychologist could also provide counseling and apply principles of human behavior.

Reevaluations: Required at least every three years for each special education student.

Referral: Initial step in the special education process; referrals for evaluation can be made by anyone associated with the student.

Related Services: Transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as required to assist a student with disabilities to benefit from education; includes speech pathology and audiology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapies, recreation, early identification and assessment for diagnostic or evaluation purposes as well as school health services, social work services in schools and parent counseling and training.

Resource Room: Area within a school where individual students may spend part of the day for supplemental help with academics.

Short-Term Objective (STO): Measurable, intermediate steps between the student's present levels of educational performance and the student's goals.

Special Education: Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a student with disabilities.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD): 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 to do mathematical calculations; includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. This does not include children who have 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.

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

Speech Therapy: Process for remediation of speech disorders, such as stuttering, lisping, misarticulation, conducted by a qualified speech-language pathologist on an individualized or small group basis.

Supplementary Aides and Services: Aids, services, and other supports provided in regular education classes or other educational settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): Acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory; perceptual and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical function; information processing and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

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

Ward of the State: "Ward" being synonymous with person for whom a guardian has been appointed; a "minor ward" being a minor for whom a guardian has been appointed solely because of minority.