

Special Education Terms and Definitions

The following list contains special education definitions and acronyms that are commonly used by schools during the IEP process.

Academic achievement

Generally refers to a child's performance in academic areas (e.g., reading or language arts, math, science, and history).

Adaptive behavior

A sort of "practical intelligence." It is usually measured by scales that identify how well a person manages within his or her own

Adapted Instructional Settings

This occurs when specific aspects of the general education school curriculum are modified by educators so that they are appropriate to the learning needs of students with disabilities. This concept is viewed as a process in which specialized instruction and support is provided rather than as a place where instruction is provided (e.g. a self-contained class).

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

Allow a person with a disability to participate fully in an activity. Examples include extended time, different test format, and alterations to a classroom.

Adverse Effect

How a student's disability negatively affects his/her ability to function successfully with educational tasks. This must be:

1. To a marked degree.
2. Not correctable via classroom accommodations and supplementary aids and services.
3. Persist over an extended period of time; and requires special education services.

Age of Majority

A student who has reached the age of majority under State law (18 years of age) who has not been determined to be incompetent. The student then becomes his/her own adult and all rights and responsibilities under IDEA shift to him/her.

Note: The parent must still be notified of activities but has no right to challenge educational decisions.

Annual goals

A required component of an IEP. Goals are written for the individual student and can be for a maximum of one year.

Appropriate Activities (3-5 year olds)

Age-relevant developmental abilities or milestones that typically developing children of the same age would be performing or would have achieved.

Assessment

Tests and other evaluation materials tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and to gather information provided by the parent and others that may assist in determining:

1. Whether the student is eligible for special education and related services; and, if so,
2. The content of the student 's IEP or IFSP, including information related to enabling the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum or, if in preschool, to participate in appropriate activities.

Assistive Technology

Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether device: acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability.

Assistive Technology Service

Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an Assistive technology device. The term includes:

- The evaluation of the needs of a student with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the student in the student 's customary environment, Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of Assistive technology devices by students with disabilities.
- Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing Assistive technology devices.
- Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with Assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs.
- Training or technical assistance for a student with a disability or, if appropriate, that student 's family; and training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education or rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of that student.

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.

Case study evaluation

A set of procedures specified within IDEA to determine possible special education eligibility

Collaboration

An interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems.

Collaborative Teaching

This is an educational approach in which general and special educators work in a coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students in educationally integrated settings. In collaborative teaching, both general and special education teachers are present in the general classroom maintaining joint responsibilities for specified education instruction that is to occur within that setting.

Complaint Procedure

A formal complaint filed with the 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)

Conference

Generic term that may refer to a multidisciplinary conference, IEP meeting, annual review, or other type of meeting. When in doubt, it is important to clarify the purpose of any conference.

Consultation

Refers to a person who has expertise in a specific area or who has been invited to give information that assists in decision-making to individuals or teams making decisions about plans or the implementation of interventions in the lives of students with disabilities, classrooms, families, and programs.

Consensus

A decision by the group to implement an educational decision on behalf of a student. Not all members must agree with the decision but although an individual disagrees he/she will not prevent the decision (made by the group) from being implemented. You may not agree but you will live with the decision and implement the actions that were agreed to by the group. All individuals also agree to support the decision in its implementation and do not express doubts about its implementation in other settings. Your disagreement must be based upon factual information or data that you have that counters the information or data that was gathered in the comprehensive case study evaluation.

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.

Curriculum

The subject matter that is to be learned. A curriculum is usually described in terms of its scope and sequence.

Delay

Development which does not occur within expected time ranges.

Disability

IDEA defines a "child with a disability" as a "child... with an intellectual disability, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance., orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; AND, who... [because of the condition] needs special education and related services."

Due Process

Special education term used to describe the process where parents may disagree with the program recommendations of the school district. With regard to IDEA, due process refers to a specific set of procedures described in 23 IAC Part 226.

Early Intervention

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

Evaluation

A series of procedures designed to provide information about a child's suspected disability; the nature and extent of the problems that are or will be adversely affecting his/her educational development; and the type of intervention and assistance needed to alleviate these problems.

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. Special education and related services which are provided to students with disabilities during the summer for the purpose of ensuring the continued provision of an appropriate education and to minimize regression.

FERPA - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

A federal law that regulates the management of student records and disclosure of information from those records. The Act has its own administrative enforcement mechanism.

Fine motor

Functions which require tiny muscle movements. For example, writing or typing would require fine motor movement.

FAPE - "free appropriate public education"

Provision as required under IDEA. Special education and related services that:

1. Are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction at no cost to the parent(s).
2. Meet the standards of the state.
3. Include preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the state.
4. Are provided in conformity with an IEP. At "no cost" means that all specially-designed instruction is provided without charge, but does not preclude incidental fees that are normally charged to non-disabled students or their parents as a part of the general education program.

Full Continuum

The range of special education placements and services provided by the school district to assure that the students enrolled receive appropriate special education support.

Functional curriculum

A curriculum focused on practical life skills. The purpose of this type of instruction is to maximize the student's generalization to real life use of his/her skills.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

A problem solving process for addressing inappropriate behavior.

Functional performance

The Department of Education points to how the term is generally understood as referring to "skills or activities that are not considered academic or related to a child's academic achievement." This term "is often used in the context of routine activities of everyday living: and refer to skills and activities of daily living skills such as: dressing, eating, going to the bathroom; social skills such as making friends and communicating with others; behavior skills, such as knowing how to behave across a range of settings; and mobility skills, such as walking, getting around, going up and down stairs.

General Education Curriculum

A single curriculum that applies to all students as adopted by a school district. This relates to the content of the curriculum and not to the setting in which it is used. Thus, to the extent applicable to an individual student with a disability and consistent with the LRE provisions, the general education curriculum could be used in any educational environment along a continuum of alternative placements.

Gross motor

Functions which require large muscle movements. For example, walking or jumping would require gross motor movement.

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.

Illinois Administrative Code

The regulations relevant to the provision of special education are located in volume 23 at part 226.

Inclusion

Term used to describe services that place students with disabilities in general education classrooms with appropriate support services.

Independent Evaluation

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.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

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.

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 other individuals who are knowledgeable about the child as appropriate. The team reviews assessment results, determines goals and objectives and program placement for the child needing services.

IEP Team Members

1. The parent (s) of the child.
2. At least one regular education teacher of the student (if the student is, or may be, participating in the general education environment). To the extent possible, the person who is (or will be) responsible for implementing the child's IEP. Note. If the student has more than one teacher, the school district may designate which teacher (s) will participate. In a situation in which all of the student 's teachers do not participate in the IEP meeting, the school district is encouraged to seek input from teachers who will

not be attending, and should ensure that any teacher not attending the meeting is informed about the results of the meeting (including receiving a copy of the IEP).

3. At least one special education teacher, or if appropriate, at least one special education provider of the student.
4. A representative of the LEA who:
 - a. Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.
 - b. Is knowledgeable about the general curriculum.
 - c. Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the LEA.
5. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results.
6. At the discretion of the parent or the school district, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student, including related services personnel as appropriate.
7. The student, whenever appropriate and when an IEP team intends to discuss postsecondary goals and transition services.
8. When an IEP team intends to discuss a student's postsecondary goals and transitions, the district must, to the extent appropriate, invite a representative from any agency "that is likely to be responsible for providing for paying for transition services." Parent consent is required for agency representative's presence.

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.

Instructional placement

Phrase used to describe the situation in which a child spends at least half of his/her school day in special education.

Intellectually Disabled

This disorder is characterized by below average cognitive functioning in two or more adaptive behaviors with onset before age 18.

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.

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.

Mediation

A voluntary dispute resolution process for which ISBE will provide mediators upon request.

Multidisciplinary conference (MDC)

A required gathering under IDEA and is the only body that can make certain determinations — specifically about a child's eligibility for special education.

Multiple Disabilities

An IEP term used to define a combination of disabilities that causes severe educational needs that require multiple special education programs.

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.

Occupational therapy

A special education related service which is usually focused upon the development of a student's fine motor skills and/or the identification of adapted ways of accomplishing activities of daily living when a student's disabilities preclude doing those tasks in typical ways.

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.

OCR - US Office for Civil Rights

An agency of the federal government's executive branch within the Department of Education. It is charged with enforcing a number of civil rights statutes including Section 504.

OSEP - US Office of Special Education Programs

An office within OSERS charged with assuring that the various states comply with IDEA.

OSERS - US Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

An agency of the federal government's executive branch within the Department of Education.

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.

Permanent record

A brief document upon which essential information is entered and preserved. The contents of the permanent record are specified in the Illinois Student Records Act.

Physical Therapists

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

Placement

The overall educational environment in which special education and related services are provided to a student with a disability in the setting in which the special education service is delivered to the student. It must be derived from the student's IEP.

Present levels of educational performance

The "present levels" statement is intended to comprehensively describe a child's abilities, performance, strengths, and needs. A well-written present level will describe: the child's strengths and weaknesses; what helps the child learn; what limits or interferes with the child's learning; objective data from current evaluations of the child, and; how the child's disability affects his or her ability to be involved and progress in the general curriculum. It is the foundation upon which the rest of the IEP can be developed to specify appropriate goals, services, supports, accommodations, and placement for the child.

Related services

IDEA requires that school districts provide whatever related services (other than medical care which is not for diagnostic purposes) a child needs in order to benefit from his or her special education program.

Resource placement

A special education placement for less than half a child's school day. Such a classroom is usually called a "resource room."

Referral

Notice to a school district that a child may be in need of special education. Although good practice suggests making referrals in writing, an oral referral may be valid. A referral sets certain timelines in place.

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.

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.

Section 504

Provision of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which prohibits recipients of federal funds from discrimination against persons with disabilities.

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.

Short-term objectives

A required component of an IEP. Each annual goal must have at least one short-term objective.

Specially Designed Instruction

Adapting content, methodology or delivery of instruction:

- To address the unique needs of an eligible student under this part that result from the student 's disability.
- To ensure access of the student to the general curriculum, so that he or she can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public school that apply to all students.

Speech and Language Impairments

Communication disorders such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment or voice impairment.

Standardized tests

Tests which have norms reflecting a larger population (usually these are age or grade based norms reflecting the performance of children throughout the country on the same tests).

Supplementary aids and services

Accommodations which could permit a student to profit from instruction in the least restrictive environment. They are required under IDEA.

Surrogate parent

An individual trained and appointed by ISBE to exercise special education rights on behalf of children with disabilities who are wards of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or are otherwise without access to parents. This is not a mechanism for evading parents who disagree with a school's proposed interventions.

Temporary record

A student's temporary record is a very extensive document including any diagnostic special education materials. Access is governed by the Illinois Student Records Act.

Transition Plan

IDEA mandates that at age 16, the IEP must include a statement about transition including goals for post-secondary activities (education, employment, community experiences and daily living skills) and the services needed to achieve these goals. This is referred to as an Individual Transition Plan or (ITP). In Illinois, this plan starts at age 14 ½.

Transition services

A coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that:

1. Are designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.
2. Are based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests.
3. Includes, but is not limited to: instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living goals and objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

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.

Visual-motor

Co-ordination of what is seen with an action. For example, one uses visual-motor coordination when catching a ball.

Visual Impairment

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