



Free Special Education Resources, Consultation, Trainings Your Arizona Parent School Connection

Glossary of Special Education Terms

Academic—subjects in the school curriculum such as reading, math, social studies, science, etc.

Achievement tests—a test, which measures what a child, has learned in the academic subjects in school.

Accommodations—provisions made in how a student accesses and demonstrates learning. These do not substantially change the instructional level, the content or the performance criteria. Such changes are made to provide a student with meaningful and productive learning experiences, environments and assessments based on individual needs and abilities.

Adaptations—changes made to the environment, curriculum, instruction and/or assessment practices in order for a student to be successful. Adaptations are based on each student's individual strengths and needs.

Adaptive physical education—modified activities that allow a child with a disability to participate in a program with the same or similar objectives as the regular physical education program.

Advocate—someone who takes action to help someone else (as in “educational advocate”); to take action on behalf of someone who cannot help himself or herself or to take action on behalf of a cause (as in advocating for legislative change).

Appeal—a written request for a change in a decision; also, the action of making such a request.

Appropriate—able to meet a need; in special education, it usually means the most

advantageous setting possible for the student, or the curriculum utilized in the student's IEP that is as close to the general education curriculum as possible.

Arizona Academic Standards—standards, which have been written for Arizona's students, to provide every student a quality education grounded in high academic standards.

Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS)—a standards-based test; provides educators and the public with valuable information regarding the progress of Arizona's students toward mastering Arizona's reading, writing and mathematics Standards.

Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards A (AIMS-A)—an alternative format of the AIMS test to measure student performance toward meeting the Arizona Standards at the Functional or Readiness levels.

Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS)—Arizona's interpretation of how they will follow and implement federal law.

Assessment—information gathering aimed at 1) evaluating previous performance, 2) describing current behavior and 3) predicting future behaviors. Assessment differs from testing in that testing reflects performance at a particular time, whereas assessments require clinical judgment to give meaning to the overall pattern and interrelationships between various results.

Assistive technology—a device or service required if “educationally” relevant and necessary to enable a child to be educated in the least restrictive environment. 1) *Assistive technology device*—any item, piece of

equipment, or product system used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability and 2) *assistive technology services*—any services that directly assist a child with a disability or others, as appropriate, in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device.

At public expense—1) means the district pays for the full cost of the independent education evaluation or ensures that an educational evaluation of the child is provided at no cost to the parent and 2) means the district pays for the full cost for the education services for the child as outlined in the IEP.

At risk—a term used with children who have, or could have, problems with development that may affect their ability to learn in the future.

Attention span—the extent to which a person can concentrate on a single task.

Autism—ARS §15-761 (1) “...a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction and that adversely affects educational performance. Characteristics include irregularities and impairments in communication, engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines and unusual responses to sensory experiences. Autism does not include children with characteristics of emotional disability... .”

AZ Leading Education through the Accountability and Results Notification System (AZ LEARNS)—is an initiative for an accountability system to ensure all students have the skill and knowledge they need to succeed. Close statewide analysis of student data and student profiles can provide measures to influence decision-making. (SAIS).

AZ READS—is a comprehensive plan aimed at improving reading achievement in Arizona. It challenges Arizonans to participate in a statewide collaborative effort to make this

vision a reality; that every Arizona child in Arizona will learn to read proficiently by third grade and will remain a proficient reader through the twelfth grade.

Auditory perception—the ability to interpret or organize the sensory data received through the ear; an example would be the ability to differentiate between the sounds of the words “leaf” and “leave.”

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)—a written behavior plan that is targeted to include services and modifications designed to address the behavior so that it does not reoccur in the school setting; or, to promote a desired behavior.

Child Find—state education agency (SEA) and public education agency (PEA) procedures for locating children ages birth through 21 with disabilities who are not receiving special education services, or who are not receiving appropriate services.

Child Study Team—(CST) a team of educators that meets to discuss concerns with a child’s school performance. This team is a pre-referral step for trying interventions in the classroom setting before referring for an evaluation in special education. Also known as a student study team (SST) or teacher assistance team (TAT).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy—a form of psychotherapy that emphasizes the important role of thinking in how we feel and what we do. Cognitive-behavioral therapists teach that when our brains are healthy, it is our thinking that causes us to feel and act the way we do. Therefore, if we are experiencing unwanted feelings and behaviors, it is important to identify the thinking that is causing the feelings/behaviors and to learn how to replace this thinking with thoughts that lead to more desirable reactions. Many times this is used with students who have emotional disabilities and/or those who have had a traumatic brain injury. Can be a related service if under direction of psychiatrist or neurologist, and a neuropsych evaluation has also shown the need for such services.

Consent—permission parents may give after they have been fully informed regarding the activity the district or school wants to implement. This information must be provided to the parents in their native language or mode of communication. Parental consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time.

Continuum of alternative placements—a variety of placements available to meet the individual needs of children with disabilities. The continuum must include instruction in regular classes, special education classes, special schools, home instruction, instruction in hospitals and institutions and instruction in other settings. The federal regulations require that the placement decision must be made on an individual basis, not on the availability of a program or programs. (Also see least restrictive environment).

Developmental history—a charting of the progress in the steps or stages of growth and development of a child (ages birth to 18 years) in such skills as sitting, walking, talking, physical, social and emotional development.

Disability—the result of any physical, sensory or mental condition that affects or prevents one’s ability to develop, achieve and/or function in an educational setting at a normal rate.

District Assessment Plan (DAP)—each district/charter is required by law to develop an assessment plan that covers all areas of the curriculum. It should be a plan that includes various learning styles and abilities. All students in each district regardless of disabling condition will be assessed.

Dispute resolution—an ADE program for districts/schools and parents who have issues and concerns. These may be handled informally through early dispute resolution, through mediation, through a written complaint to the department or through due process. The intent of the dispute resolution process is to provide solutions to concerns at the lowest level possible.

Due Process (procedure)—action that protects a person’s rights; in special education, this applies to action taken to protect the educational rights of students with disabilities. An example is the use of a due process hearing to settle a dispute between parents and the school or district.

Eligible—ability to qualify to receive special education services based on standard criteria.

Emotional Disability (ED)—ARS §15-761 (6)(a)(b) “...a condition whereby a child exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects the child’s performance in the educational environment;’ and, ‘includes children who are schizophrenic but does not include children who are socially maladjusted unless they are also determined to have an emotional disability as determined by evaluation.’”

English Language Learners (ELL) or (EL)—students who primarily speak any language other than English, who are still learning how to read, write and/or speak in English.

Evaluation—a collection and review of information about a child’s learning needs, which may include social, psychological and educational assessments used to determine need for special services; a process using observation, testing and test analysis to determine an individual’s strengths and weaknesses to plan his or her educational services. Parental consent for initial evaluation must be obtained for this process.

Evaluation team—a team of people including the child’s parents and specialists from different areas of expertise who observe and test a child to identify his or her strengths and weaknesses.

Extended School Year (ESY)—additional special education and related services for a child with a disability to supplement the normal school year, which are provided as

part of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for time periods when school is not in session.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)—one of the key requirements of Public Laws 94-142 and 101-476 and 105-17, which states that an education program must be provided to all eligible children (regardless of disability) without cost to families. “Appropriate” is not defined, but other references within the law imply the supports and services that can best meet the child’s educational needs so the child can benefit from his/her education.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)—a targeted assessment that addresses a student’s behavior that is interfering with his/her learning. The results are to be used to develop a behavior intervention plan to replace the unwanted behavior or to stimulate desired behavior. The IEP team must look at reinforcers and consequences that will ensure that the behavior does not reoccur in the school setting.

Hearing Impairment (HI)—ARS §15-761 (7) “...a loss of acuity which interferes with the child’s performance in the educational environment and requires the provision of special education and related services.”

IDEA ‘04—abbreviation of the title of (H.R.) 1357 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, amended in 2004. Also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act ‘04 (IDEIA ‘04).

Identification—the process of locating, identifying and evaluating children needing special education services.

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)—an educational evaluation done by a qualified examiner outside the school system which must be considered by the school system making decisions about the child’s education.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)—a written education plan for an eligible child with disabilities developed by a team of

professionals (teachers, therapists, etc.) and the child’s parents. It is reviewed and updated yearly and describes how the child is presently performing, what the child’s learning needs are and what services will be provided to the child.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)—a written plan for an infant or toddler (ages birth to three) years with developmental delays, developed by a team of qualified professionals and the family. The IFSP must contain the level of development, strengths, needs, major goals or outcomes expected, services needed, date of the next evaluation and the starting date of the present IFSP.

Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) —1) a physical location outside the regular classroom, determined by the IEP team to be appropriate for a student with a disability. 2) A change in the physical location of where a student with a disability will receive his/her instruction, usually the result of a disciplinary action. The general curriculum will continue to be available to the student, as well as services and modifications as necessary. 3) A change in placement ordered by an administrator or an IEP team for behavior that includes weapons or illegal drugs.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)—to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled.

Location—setting on the continuum of alternative placements; it does not refer to the particular school, classroom, or teacher who will be implementing the child’s IEP.

Mediation—an informal intervention between parents and a school system to resolve disputes.

Medicaid in the Public Schools (MIPS)—third party payment for covered services performed by qualified providers reimbursed to the school or district from Medicaid.

Mental Retardation (MR)—ARS §15-761 (12), “...means a significant impairment of

general intellectual functioning that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and that adversely affects the child's performance in the educational environment.”

Modifications—are substantial changes in what a student is expected to learn and to demonstrate. Changes may be made in the instructional level, the content or the performance criteria. Such changes are made to provide a student with meaningful and productive learning experiences, environments and assessments based on individual needs and abilities.

Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET)—a team composed of educators, administrators, agency staff and parents as equal team members. This team reviews existing data and any additional evaluation data to determine if the student is eligible for special education services.

Multiple Disabilities—ARS §15-761 (16) “...learning and developmental problems resulting from multiple disabilities as determined by evaluation that cannot be provided for adequately in a program designed to meet the needs of children with less complex disabilities.”

Network—in special education, an active group made up of people who communicate with one another to exchange information and share resources on common interests.

Neuropsychological Evaluation—a medical evaluation ordered by a psychiatrist, physician or neurologist for the purpose of assessing the presence or effects of organic brain damage. A neuropsychological evaluation is different from a psychological or psychiatric evaluation, which typically identifies mental health, emotional, personality and/or behavioral disabilities.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—public law based on four basic education reform principles: 1) stronger accountability for results; 2) increased flexibility and local control; 3) expanded options for parents; and 4) an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work.

Occupational Therapy (OT)—a rehabilitative process directed by an occupational therapist whereby purposeful activities are employed as a basis for improving muscular control; may focus on fine motor development and/or the upper half of the individual's body; may be a related service for children with disabilities if it is determined necessary for an appropriate education. Services may also include cognitive behavioral therapy.

Orthopedic Impairment (OI)—ARS §15-761 (18) “...one or more severe orthopedic impairments and includes those that are caused by congenital anomaly, disease and other causes, such as amputation or cerebral palsy and that adversely affect a child's performance in the educational environment.”

Other Health Impairment (OHI)—ARS §15-761 (19) “...limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, due to chronic or acute health problems which adversely affect a pupil's educational performance.”

Parent Training and Information Centers (PTI)—projects that provide information and training to parents of children with special needs about acquiring services; working with schools and educators to ensure the most effective educational placement for their child; understanding the methods of testing and evaluating a child with special needs; and making informed decisions about their child's education.

Physical Therapy (PT)—the treatment of disabilities using massage, exercise, water, light, heat, etc., all of which are mechanical rather than medical in nature. Physical therapy is practiced by a professionally trained physical therapist under the referral of a physician; in school it may be a related service if it is determined to be educationally necessary.

Policy/policies—assurance statements that guarantee certain procedures will routinely be followed by staff as related to early intervention and special education programs. Policies are the rules that a state or local

school system has for providing services for, and educating students with special needs.

Positive Behavior Support—an initiative to establish a comprehensive, yet focused nationwide effort to improve the capacity of its schools to address the full range of school-wide behavioral challenges facing educators. The initiative provides schools with the expertise and resources necessary to establish and maintain Positive Behavioral Support programs.

Preschool Delays—ARS §15-761 (23) a preschool moderate delay defined as “...performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced test that measures at least one and one-half, but not more than three, standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age in two or more of the following areas:

- (a) Cognitive development.
- (b) Physical development.
- (c) Communication development.
- (d) Social or emotional development.
- (e) Adaptive development.”

ARS §15-761 (24)—a severe delay is defined as “...performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced test that measures more than three standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age in one or more... .” of the areas listed in (a)–(e) above.

ARS §15-761 (25)—a preschool speech/language delay means “... performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced language test that measures at least one and one half standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age or whose speech, out of context, is unintelligible to a listener who is unfamiliar with the child... .”

Prior Written Notice (PWN)—a written document the district or school gives to the parents of special education students when they propose or refuse to initiate a change in the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of free appropriate public education. This document must include: 1) a description

of the action proposed or refused and why that action was taken; 2) any other options considered in taking that action and why those were rejected; 3) which tests, evaluations, or records the school used to support that action; 4) a description of any other factors involved in taking the action; 5) a full written explanation of procedural safeguards; and 6) a list of contacts to explain procedural safeguards to parents.

Public Education Agency (PEA)—a school district, charter school, accommodation school, state supported institution or other political subdivision of the state that is responsible for providing education to children with disabilities.

Public Law (P.L.) 94-142—also called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA). The first federal law mandating special education; passed in 1975 requiring that public schools provide a free appropriate public education to school-aged children ages five through twenty-one (exact ages depend on the state’s mandate), regardless of disability.

Public Law (P.L.) 101-476—amendment to P.L. 94-142 (1975) passed in 1990 requiring public schools continue to provide a free appropriate public education to children ages 3–21, including Autism and Traumatic Brain Injury, regardless of the disability; also called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Public Law (P.L.) 102-119—an amendment to P.L. 99-457 (1986) requiring states and territories to provide a free appropriate public education to all eligible children ages birth to 5 and provides funds for states and territories to coordinate services to infants and children with developmental delays ages birth up to three years.

Related services—transportation and developmental, corrective, and other supportive services that a child with disabilities requires in order to benefit from education. Examples of related services include, but are not limited to: assistive technology, speech/language pathology, audiology, health services, psych-

ological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, counseling services, parent training, interpreters for the hearing impaired, social work services for educational purposes, rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic and evaluation purposes.

Student Accountability Information System (SAIS)—a data based electronic reporting system devised by ADE for schools to report performance data per student. It will be used for accountability and student profile report decisions during educational reforms.

Service delivery—services (therapy, instruction, and treatment) provided to a child receiving special education.

Special Education Services (SpED)—adapting the content, methodology or delivery of services; or specially designed instruction for eligible children ages three through twenty-one with special needs. These programs/services include special learning methods and/ or materials in the regular classroom; special classes and programs; instruction at home; in hospitals; and/or institutions, or other settings if the learning or physical problems require them. These services also include related services to meet the special needs of eligible children at no cost to the parent. Special education services are those needed in order for the child to benefit from his/her education.

Special needs (as in a child with “special needs”)—a term used to describe a child who has disabilities or one who is at risk for developing disabilities and who requires special services or treatment in order to make progress.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)—ARS §15-761 (34)(a)(b)(c) “...means a specific learning disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical cal-

culations;’...‘includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and aphasia;’ and...‘does not include learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, motor or emotional disabilities, of mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.”

Speech Therapy—the purpose of speech-language therapy is to enhance intentional communication via expression of ideas, obtaining desires, sharing information and interpersonal interaction. Language is the means by which communication is achieved.

Speech and Language—ARS §15-761 (35) “...a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, severe disorders of syntax, semantics of vocabulary, or functional language skills, or a voice impairment ... to the extent that it calls attention to itself, it interferes with communication or causes a child to be maladjusted.”

Standard deviation—a unit used to measure the amount by which a particular score differs from the Mean (average) of all the scores in the sample (persons used to take the test before it is used with the public). Different tests have different standard deviations.

State Education Agency (SEA)—the agency or office within each state that oversees special education requirements and coordinates special education programs and services for public school systems in that state.

Student Led IEP (SL-IEP)—the participation and contribution of a student in leading some or all of their own Individual Education Plan team meeting.

Surrogate parent—a person appointed by the court to function in the role of parent for a child only on special education matters when the natural parent cannot be identified or located. The person has all the same rights as a natural parent for special education procedures.

Transition—a movement or change from one level of education to another. There are six identified stages of transition. These include: 1) early intervention services or home to preschool; 2) preschool to kindergarten; 3) primary to intermediate grades; 4) intermediate to middle school; 5) middle school to high school; and 6) high school to post-secondary.

Transition services—a set of activities which prepares a student with a disability for the move from school to post-school activities such as employment, post-secondary education, adult services, independent living or community participation.

Transition services must be included annually in the IEP for students by age sixteen. These are based on the student's needs, preferences and interests. Transition activities must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and post-school living objectives, and can include daily living skills training and vocational education.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)—ARS §15-761 (39)(a)(b)(c) "...an acquired injury to the brain that is caused by an external physical force and that results in 'total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects educational performance;'... 'applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in mild, moderate or severe impairments in one or more areas, including cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing and speech;'... 'does not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.'"

Visual Impairment (VI)—ARS §15-761 (40) "...a loss in visual acuity or a loss of visual field...that interferes with the child's performance in the educational environment and that requires the provision of special education and related services."

Visual perception—the identification, organization, and interpretation of sensory data received by the individual through the eye; for example, in school it includes the ability to differentiate between the letter (d) and the letter (b).

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