



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

Glossary of Special Education Terms

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

Achievement tests—tests designed to measure a student’s present functioning level in basic academic skills. Items are selected to represent typical curriculum materials at specific grade levels.

Accommodations—provisions made to allow a student to access and demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not substantially change the instructional level, the content or the performance criteria, but are made in order to provide a student equal access to learning and equal opportunity to demonstrate what is known. Accommodations shall not alter the content of the curriculum or a test, or provide inappropriate assistance to the student within the context of the test.

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

Adaptive physical education—modified active-ties that allow a child with a disability to participate in a program with the same or similar objectives as the mainstream physical education program.

Advocate—someone who: takes action to help someone else (as in educational advocate); takes action on behalf of someone who cannot help himself or herself; or takes 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 suitable setting possible for the student, or the supports and services

that can best meet the child’s educational needs so the child can benefit from his/her education.

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

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

Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards, Alternate (AIMS-A)—an alternative format of the AIMS test to measure student performance toward meeting the Arizona Academic Standards.

Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS)—a formal written enactment of the legislative authority that governs the state. Statutes, typically, command or prohibit something that was determined to be law by a legislative body.

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 in the

selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device.

At No Cost—all specially designed instruction is provided without charge, but does not prevent Public Education Agencies (PEAs) from charging incidental fees that are normally charged to nondisabled students or their parents as part of the regular education program.

At Public Expense—when the Public Education Agency (PEA) either pays for the full cost of the independent education evaluation (IEE) or ensures that an educational evaluation of the child is provided at no cost to the parent.

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.

Autism—a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction and 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.

Arizona Leading Education through the Accountability and Results Notification System (AZ LEARNS)—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.

AZ READS—a comprehensive plan aimed at improving reading achievement in Arizona. The plan requirements are founded in state statute and focused on the goal that every child in Arizona will learn to read proficiently by third grade and will remain a proficient reader through the twelfth grade. The comprehensive plan includes components for early diagnosis and intervention, teacher training, and accountability.

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

Child Find—a component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities, aged birth through 21, who are in need of early intervention or special education services. Public Education Agencies (PEAs) and the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP) must have policies and procedures in place for “finding” eligible children.

Child Study Team (CST)—a team of educators that meets to discuss concerns for a child’s school performance. This team is a pre-referral step for trying interventions in the classroom setting before referring for an evaluation for special education eligibility; also known as a Student Study Team (SST) or Teacher Assistance Team (TAT).

Consent—when the parent has been fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is being sought, in his or her native language, or other mode of communication. 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. Parental consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. If a parent revokes consent, that revocation is not retroactive.

Continuum of 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 make provisions for supplementary services (such as resource room or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement. The federal regulations require the placement decision be made on an individual basis, not on the availability of a program or programs.

Developmental Delay—performance by a child who is at least three years of age but under ten years of age 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. The results of the norm-referenced measure must be corroborated by information from a

comprehensive development assessment and from parental input, if available, as measured by judgment based assessment or survey. If there is a discrepancy between the measures, the evaluation team shall determine eligibility based on preponderance of the information presented.

Developmental History—documentation 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—being physically or mentally impaired in a way that substantially limits activity especially in relation to employment or education.

Dispute Resolution—an Arizona Department of Education (ADE) program, as outlined in IDEA, for parents and PEAs who have issues and concerns. These may be handled informally through mediation or more formally through a written complaint or due process. The intent of the dispute resolution process is to provide solutions to concerns at the lowest level possible.

Due Process—action that protects a person’s rights. In special education, this applies to action taken to protect the educational rights of students with disabilities.

Due Process Hearing—a fair and impartial administrative hearing conducted by an impartial Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) in accordance with federal and state law.

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

Emotional Disability (ED)—a condition whereby a child exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree adversely affects the child’s performance in the educational environment: (i) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors; (ii) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (iii) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (iv) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; (v) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems; 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)—students whose primary home language is other than English, who are still learning how to read, write and/or speak in English. ELL assessments are administered to determine if a child has developed the English language skills necessary to succeed in the English language curricula.

Evaluation—procedures used to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs. The evaluation should include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including information provided by the parent that may assist in determining eligibility and deciding upon the content of the IEP (including information to enable involvement and progress in the general education curriculum and participation in appropriate activities). Parental consent for initial evaluation must be obtained for this process.

Evaluator—a qualified person in a field relevant to the child’s disability who administers specific and individualized assessments for the purpose of special education evaluation and placement.

Extended School Year (ESY)—additional special education and related services for a child with a disability to supplement the normal school year, which is provided as part of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). ESY services are necessary if either of the following applies: 1) The benefits the pupil gained during the regular school year would be significantly jeopardized if the student is not provided educational services; 2) The student would experience severe or substantial regression if he/she is not provided educational services during recesses or the summer months and the regression would result in substantial skill loss of a degree and duration that would seriously impede the student’s progress toward educational goals.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)—special education and related services that: a) are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; b) meet the standards of the state education agency (SEA); c) include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved;

and d) are provided in conformity with an individualized education program (IEP). “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 Behavioral Assessment (FBA)—a targeted assessment that addresses a student’s behavior which is interfering with his/her learning. The results are used to develop a positive Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) 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)—a loss of hearing acuity, as determined by an evaluation as outlined in Arizona Revised Statutes, which interferes with the child’s performance in the educational environment and requires the provision of special education and related services.

IDEA 2004—abbreviation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, amended in 2004; also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA 2004).

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)—an evaluation done by a qualified evaluator who is not employed by the PEA responsible for the education of the child and that must be considered by the PEA 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.) along with the child’s parents. It is reviewed and updated annually 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) Physical location outside the regular classroom,

determined by the IEP team to be appropriate for a student with a disability; 2) change in the physical location of where a student with a disability will receive his/her instruction, usually the result of a disciplinary action; or, 3) change in placement ordered by an administrator or an IEP team for behavior that includes weapons, illegal drugs, or if the student has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person on school premises, or at a school function. While in an IAES, the student with a disability must continue to receive educational services to enable him/her to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and progress toward meeting the goals set out in the student’s IEP.

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 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 PEA to resolve a dispute. It is conducted by a qualified and impartial third party who is trained in effective mediation techniques. Mediation is voluntary and should not be used to deny or delay a parent’s rights to a hearing on the parent’s due process complaint.

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

Mental Retardation (MR)—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. *Mild Mental Retardation*—means performance on standard measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior between two and three standard deviations below the mean for children of the same age. *Moderate Mental Retardation*—means performance on standard measures of intellectual and adaptive behavior between three and four standard deviations below the mean for children of the same age.

Modifications—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, evaluators, 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—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. Multiple Disabilities include any of the following conditions that require the provision of special education and related services: a) Two or more of the following conditions: i) hearing impairment; ii) orthopedic impairment; iii) moderate mental retardation; and, iv) visual impairment; b) a child with a disability listed in subdivision (a) of this paragraph existing concurrently with a condition of mild mental retardation, emotional disability or specific learning disability.

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)—services provided by a qualified occupational therapist and includes improving, developing, or restoring functions impaired or lost through illness, injury, or deprivation; improving ability to perform tasks for independent functioning if functions are impaired or lost; and preventing, through early intervention, initial or further impairment or loss of function.

Orthopedic Impairment (OI)—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)—means 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)—federally funded projects found in each state which provide various resources and services to parents of children with special needs. They provide information and training about acquiring services; working with PEAs 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. The PTI in Arizona is Raising Special Kids and they contract with Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona to serve a portion of the state.

Physical Therapy (PT)—services provided by a qualified physical therapist which are typically related to gross motor activities, such as navigating stairs, riding a bike, and catching a ball. It may be a related service if it is determined to be educationally necessary based upon evaluation results.

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 guidelines that a state or PEA has for providing services and special education to students with disabilities.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)—a research-based initiative to improve the capacity of schools to address the full range of school-wide behavioral challenges facing educators. This national initiative provides schools with the expertise and resources necessary to establish and maintain positive behavioral support programs.

Preschool 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 following areas: a) cognitive development, (b) physical development, (c) communication development, (d) social or emotional

development, (e) adaptive development. The results of the norm-referenced measure must be corroborated by information from a comprehensive developmental assessment and from parental input, if available, as measured by a judgment based assessment or survey. If there is a discrepancy between the measures, the evaluation team shall determine eligibility based on a preponderance of the information presented.

Prior Written Notice (PWN)—a written document the PEA gives to the parents of special education students when they propose or refuse to initiate or change 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.

Related Services—transportation and such 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; psychological 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 is used for accountability and student profile report decisions during educational reforms.

Special Education—specially designed instruction, provided at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, the home, hospitals and institutions, and other settings.

Specially Designed Instruction—adapting the content, methodology or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of a child with a disability and to ensure that child's access to the general curriculum as identified in the academic standards adopted by the state board of education.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)—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 calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, dyslexia and developmental aphasia, and does not include learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, or of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Speech-Language Pathology Services—includes the identification of children with speech or language impairments; diagnosis and appraisal of specific speech or language impairments, provision of speech and language services for the habilitation or prevention of communicative impairments, and counseling and guidance of parents, children, and teachers regarding speech and language impairments.

Speech and Language Impairment—(a) for a preschool child means performance on a norm-reference 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. Eligibility for a preschool child under this subdivision is appropriate only when a comprehensive developmental assessment and parental input indicate that the preschool child is not eligible for services under preschool category or under the developmental delay category; (b) for a child who has reached the required age for kindergarten, means a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language

impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

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 education. In Arizona, the SEA is the Arizona Department of Education (ADE).

Surrogate Parent—a person appointed by the court or ADE 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 in education. 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 coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that: 1) is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; 2) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and

includes: i) instruction; ii) related services; iii) community experiences; iv) the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives; and, v) if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation. Transition services must be included annually in the IEP for students by age sixteen.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)—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, which adversely affects educational performance. It 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. TBI does not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Visual Impairment (VI)—means 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.

References

- Arizona Administrative Code. (2008–2009). Title 7 Chapter 2. www.azsos.gov/public_services/Table_of_Contents.htm
- Arizona Department of Education. (2009). www.azed.gov
- Arizona Revised Statutes. (2008–2009). Title 15 Education. www.azleg.state.az.us/ArizonaRevisedStatutes.asp?Title=15
- National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY). www.nichcy.org
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports of Arizona. www.pbisaz.org

The contents of this publication were developed in 1996 and revised in September 2009, by the Parent Information Network (PIN) with funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Education under IDEA 2004. These contents do not necessarily represent the guideline of the agency, nor should endorsement by the federal government be assumed. The Arizona Department of Education of the State of Arizona does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs, activities or in its hiring and employment practices. If you have questions or concerns regarding this statement, please contact Administrative Services at 602-542-3186. This document is in the public domain and may be freely reproduced in its current format. For more information, call the Parent Information Network at 877-230-PINS (7467) or visit our website at www.azed.gov/ess/pinspals.