

The ABC's of IEPs:

Know these commonly used terms, acronyms

Have you ever been in an IEP meeting where you don't understand at least one term or acronym used?

If so, you're not alone. Special education jargon can be complicated and difficult to remember. But IEP meeting participants should make an effort to familiarize themselves with commonly used acronyms and terms. Doing so will result in a more informed IEP team and fewer misunderstandings.

Below are acronyms and terms that IEP team members need to know.

* Accommodation

An adaptation or modification that enables a student with a disability to participate in educational programming, to the extent possible, as if he were nondisabled.

* AT (assistive technology) device

Any item, piece of equipment or product system that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability.

* AT (assistive technology) service

Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device.

* BIP (behavioral intervention plan)

A component of a child's IEP that describes positive behavior interventions and other strategies that the district must implement to prevent and control unacceptable behaviors.

* Continuum of alternative placements

The range of placements in which a student with a disability may receive some or all of his individualized education program ranging from less restrictive to most restrictive.

* Curriculum-based measurement

A form of progress monitoring that involves delivering different tests that assess the same skills at the same difficulty level to students throughout the school year to gauge their growth.

*** Direct instruction**

Explicit instruction that includes explaining to students exactly what they are expected to learn, demonstrating the steps needed to accomplish a task and providing opportunities for practice and feedback: suitable for large-group instruction, but does not easily accommodate open-ended questions or higher-order thinking.

*** Educational methodology**

Choices in instruction methods or curriculum content.

*** ESY (extended school year) programming**

Special education programming that extends beyond the 180 days of the traditional school year. School districts are required to provide ESY programming to IDEA-eligible students for whom it is appropriate, even if the school district does not ordinarily provide summer school or other educational services outside the regular school year.

*** Evaluation**

An assessment conducted to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs.

*** FAPE (free appropriate public education)**

Special education and related services provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; that meet the standards of the SEA; that include an appropriate preschool, elementary or secondary school education in the state involved; and that are provided in conformity with an IEP.

*** FBA (functional behavioral assessment)**

Provides the IEP team with additional information, analysis and strategies for dealing with undesirable behavior, especially when it interferes with a child's education. The process involves some variant of identifying the core or "target" behavior; observing the pupil and collecting data on the target behavior, antecedents and consequences; formulating a hypothesis about the cause(s) of the behavior; developing an intervention or interventions to test the hypothesis; and collecting data on the effectiveness of the intervention(s) in changing the behavior.

*** Functional skills**

Skills of self-care, social skills, domestic maintenance, employment or vocational skills and recreation. Also called independent living skills.

*** General education**

As distinguished from special education, an established curriculum of academic subjects offered in essentially the same fashion for all children. The term frequently is used interchangeably with regular education.

*** Generalization**

Ability to apply a skill or behavior learned in one setting, or ability to apply a learned skill or behavior in similar situations.

*** Goals**

Annual goals are statements that describe what a child with a disability can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a 12-month period in the child's special education program.

*** IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)**

Federal legislation that requires states to provide all children with disabilities with a free appropriate public education.

*** IEE (independent educational evaluation)**

An evaluation of a child by a non-school district employee that parents may obtain as a right under the IDEA.

*** IEP (individualized educational program)**

A written document ideally developed in a collaborative and cooperative effort between parents and school personnel that describes the child's abilities and needs, and prescribes the placement and services designed to meet the child's unique needs.

*** Inclusion**

The placement of a child with a disability with her chronological age peers in a regular education class.

*** LEA (local educational agency)**

The public board of education or other public authority that exercises direction over public elementary schools and secondary schools in a public subdivision.

*** LRE (least restrictive environment)**

Generally, the appropriate placement for a child with a disability that most closely approximates where the child, if nondisabled, would be educated; not necessarily the regular education classroom and not synonymous with inclusion or mainstreaming.

*** Mainstreaming**

The placement of a child with a disability alongside nondisabled children in the regular education setting.

*** Paraprofessional**

A school employee who assists students with instruction and other related supports under the supervision of a qualified teacher or other qualified professional.

*** Parent counseling and training**

Consists of counseling to educate parents about their child's disability, to help parents resolve emotional stress resulting from coping with the child's disability, and training for more effective communication with the child and at-home management of problem behavior consistent with the approach used at school.

*** Placement**

The setting in which special education services are provided to the student.

*** Positive behavior interventions**

Positive reinforcers, rewards or consequences provided to a child for specific instances of behavior (or refraining from behaviors) as appropriate for the purpose of allowing the student to meet his behavioral goals and objectives.

*** Present level of educational performance**

A baseline measure of a student's existing skills and abilities that a district uses to develop measurable and appropriate IEP goals.

*** Reevaluation**

Periodic evaluation of a student already identified as eligible for services under the IDEA. The reevaluation may not occur more than once a year, unless the parent and public agency agree otherwise. It must occur at least once every three years, unless the parent and the public agency agree that it is unnecessary.

*** Regression-recoupment**

Loss of learned skills during the summer resulting in the need to relearn at the start of the new school year.

*** Related services**

Transportation and such development, corrective and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. Includes speech language pathology services, physical therapy, occupational therapy and recreation.

*** SEA (state educational agency)**

The state board of education, or other agency of office primarily responsible for the state supervision of public elementary and secondary schools.

*** Self-contained class**

Located within a regular education school, a full-day or mostly full-day class or program for children with disabilities, usually composed of children in the same categorical grouping who cannot be educated appropriately in a general education classroom.

*** SOP (summary of performance)**

Summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance, which should include recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting his postsecondary goals. The local education agency shall provide the child with this summary when his eligibility terminates due to graduation with a regular high school diploma or due to exceeding the age eligibility.

*** Special education**

Public education for a student with a disability consisting of other than the regular curriculum, although regular education placement or materials also may qualify as special education if they meet the individual needs of the child.

*** Statement of annual goals**

Required portion of the IEP that sets out the highest skill level the child is reasonably expected to attain in one year.

*** Statement of present levels of educational performance**

Required portion of the IEP that should include: student's academic achievement; student's testing scores (with an evaluation of the scores); description of the student's emotional maturity, self-help skills, adaptive skills and development; a physical report; and a statement of the student's prevocational and vocational skills.

*** Supplemental aids and services**

Supports provided in regular education classes, other educational-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. Examples include instructional accommodations and consultative services.

*** Transition services**

A coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability focused on improving the academic achievement and functional achievement of the child to facilitate his movement from school to postsecondary activities. Transition services include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.

*** Vocational skills**

Abilities and competencies needed to obtain and maintain employment in an area and at a level consistent with one's maximum capability and interests.

Source: Special Education Dictionary by John W. Norlin, Esq., Julie J. Kline, Esq. and Amy E. Slater, Esq.