

Common Special Education Acronyms

504 Plan	A student who does not qualify for an IEP may still be entitled to accommodations or services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (now the Americans with Disabilities Act), which protects students with disabilities from discrimination based on disability. Accommodations and services provided under Section 504 are typically documented in a 504 plan.
AAC	Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) can include everything from low-tech supports such as picture cards to high-tech devices that produce words and sentences. AAC supports and devices have been shown to increase a child’s communication skills, reduce social isolation, and are intended to supplement a child’s work in speech therapy, not replace it.
ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is an intensive therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder that uses observation to assess a child’s behavior and develop a treatment plan to help improve their verbal, motor, reasoning, and behavior skills. While ABA is one of the most widely accepted and long-standing therapies for children with autism, it is also highly criticized by autistic adults, who feel it has been used to “normalize” people with autism instead of embracing their neurodiversity.
ADA	The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The ADA became law in 1990.
ADL	Activities of Daily Living (ADL) describe the basic self-care tasks that one initially learns as a very young child. They include walking, feeding, dressing, toileting, bathing, and transferring (being able to move from one body position to another).

AIM	Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) refers to print-based educational materials that are converted into specialized formats required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) such as braille, large print, audio and digital text.
APE	Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) refers to print-based educational materials that are converted into specialized formats required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) such as braille, large print, audio and digital text.
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a student for an IEP, and describes a developmental disability and neurological difference that affects a person's behavior, communication, and social skills.
ASL	American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of many North Americans who are deaf and hard of hearing, and is a complete language that is expressed by movements of the hands and face. ASL has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English.
AT	Assistive Technology (AT) is any device, software, or equipment that can help kids with learning and attention issues work around their challenges. Examples include text-to-speech technology and keyboards as well as low-tech tools like lined paper and pencil grips.
BI	A Behavioral Interventionist (BI) works one-on-one with a child in the school, home, or community to implement an individualized Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) in collaboration with and under the direction of a qualified Behavioral Consultant.
BIP	A Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) is used when a specific behavior impedes learning of the student or others, and requires a detailed plan to teach an alternative behavior that meets the student's need in a more acceptable way. The plan is written by the school IEP team and must be agreed to by the parent.
D	Deafness is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a student for an IEP, and describes students who are unable to hear most or all sounds even with a hearing aid.

DB	DB stands for deaf-blindness, another of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a student for an IEP, and describes students who have both severe hearing loss and severe vision loss.
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is a series of short tests that assess early childhood (K–6) literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
ED	Emotional Disturbance (ED) is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a student for an IEP, and represents a broad category that signifies mental health needs. The following diagnoses may be considered ED or OHI (other health impairment): anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia.
ELL	English Language Learners (ELL) are students whose first language is not English, and who are in the process of learning English.
ESY	Extended School Year (ESY) describes additional instructional support provided to students with disabilities outside of the traditional school year (usually during summer break). ESY is intended to provide students with disabilities with additional support in accordance with their IEP so that they can retain the skills they learned during the school year.
FBA	A Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) seeks to identify the mechanisms and reasons behind a specific behavior that prevents a student from accessing their education. Understanding why a child behaves the way they do and what function it may be serving is the first step to developing strategies to treat the behavior.
FERPA	The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of all students' education records at schools that receive funding from an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.
FAPE	A Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is an educational right of all students with disabilities that is guaranteed by the IDEA. FAPE requires a school to provide special education that meets the unique needs of the child in the least restrictive environment (LRE), including an IEP that provides annual goals, progress monitoring, accommodations and

	modifications, related services such as speech and occupational therapy, and more.
GenEd	A general education (GenEd) classroom is taught by an instructor certified for general education who teaches the general curriculum to a classroom composed of at least 70 percent of students who are not eligible for special education.
HI	Hearing impairment (HI) is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a student for an IEP, and is used to describe a student with partial hearing loss.
ID	An intellectual disability (ID) is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a student for an IEP, and describes a cognitive disability that signifies below-average intellectual ability across academic and functional domains.
IDEA	Originally enacted in 1975 under a different name, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that guarantees a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities. It requires that special education, related services, and early intervention are provided to children with qualifying disabilities, and that the rights of those children are protected. The law also offers grants to states and educational agencies to support research, special education, related services, and early intervention.
IDR	Informal Dispute Resolution (IDR) occurs after the IEP team has exhausted all options of resolving outstanding disputes related to a student’s program, and holds a meeting in a voluntary and confidential setting. An IDR can provide the parent and district with the opportunity to find a solution while potentially saving both parties legal and advocate fees.
IEE	If the district conducts an assessment of your child and you disagree with the results, you have the right to an Independent Educational Evaluation at public expense. An IEE is conducted by a qualified examiner who is not an employee of the school district. The right to request an IEE applies to all kinds of assessments, such as assistive technology assessments or speech, occupational, or physical therapy assessments – you can request an IEE for any purpose if it impacts your

	child's education.
IEP	An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written plan detailing the individualized program that has been designed to meet the unique needs of every child who qualifies as having one of the 13 qualifying disabilities identified by IDEA.
IFSP	An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is a plan developed for children from birth to three years old with developmental delays. An IFSP details what you and the team hope your child will achieve, and what early intervention services are needed to help your child reach those goals. Many early intervention services seek to meet the child where they are, and are provided in the home. Similar to an IEP, an IFSP must be reviewed and updated every year, with the addition of periodic reviews every six months.
ITP	The Individual Transition Plan (ITP) is a written plan outlining the supports a student will need as they prepare for passage from school to adult life. The ITP must be based on the student's needs, preferences, and interests, and reflect the student's own goals. Objectives, timelines, and the people and organizations responsible for meeting those objectives should be written into the ITP.
LAS	Language and Speech Services (LAS) are provided by school-based speech pathologists to students who have been identified as having a Speech Language Impairment that affects their educational performance such as stuttering, articulation issues, language impairment, and voice impairment.
LEA	The Local Education Agency (LEA) refers to the school district. A representative from the district, or LEA, participates in IEP meetings in order to make sure the district provides the child with FAPE. This person is qualified to discuss and oversee the IEP, and has knowledge of both the general curriculum and what public resources are available.
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) refers to the placement of a student with disabilities that supports their academic, social, emotional, and behavioral growth and progress. According to the IDEA, students with disabilities are entitled to the least restrictive environment that ensures they have access to the general curriculum, can learn both academic

	and social skills, are provided with the accommodations and modifications they need, and have opportunities to engage meaningfully with nondisabled peers, including in extracurricular and nonacademic activities.
MD	The term multiple disabilities (MD) is used for students who meet the criteria for more than one of the 13 disability categories that qualifies a student for an IEP.
MTSS	The framework known as Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) provides guidelines to California educators to ensure that all students receive the academic and behavioral support they need to achieve the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). MTSS supports the needs of special education students as well as English language learners, those in gifted and talented programs, and more.
NPA	A nonpublic (and nonsectarian) agency (NPA) refers to a private institution or individual that provides services to students with disabilities. Public schools that cannot provide the special education needs or related services of a student can contract with an NPA to provide those services.
NPS	Nonpublic, nonsectarian schools (NPSs) are privately operated, publicly funded schools that are certified by the California Department of Education to provide special education services to students whose needs cannot be met by the public school system. Once a district agrees to place a student in a nonpublic school, that school is required to provide all services listed in the student’s IEP.
OAH	The Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) is an independent office within California’s Department of General Services that provides neutral, independent administrative law judges (ALJ) who preside over hearings for state and local government agencies for both special education and general matters.
OCR	The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is a federal agency that oversees the administration of antidiscrimination civil rights laws for all schools, districts, and other public agencies that are funded by the Department of Education. The job of the OCR is to make sure all students have equal access to education, to support agencies and advocates that work to

	support civil rights, and to resolve discrimination cases when they occur.
OHI	Other Health Impairment (OHI) is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a student for an IEP, and covers a range of conditions that limit a child’s strength, energy, or alertness. These can include ADHD, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and depression.
OI	Orthopedic impairment (OI) is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a student for an IEP, and describes a physical disability that requires special education services to support a student in making academic progress.
OSEP	The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) supports children with disabilities from birth to age 21 by providing guidance and funding grants to infants and families programs as well as institutions of higher education and nonprofit organizations that provide personnel training, technical assistance, research, parent training, and more.
OT	Occupational therapists (OTs) help people learn the skills they need for maximum independence in their daily life. Some of the skills OTs work to support include gross and fine motor skills, social skills, and proprioception, or awareness of the body in space.
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs use positive strategies and interventions to support student safety in schools and promote positive behavior. PBIS programs are evidence-based, and are organized in a tiered system to provide different levels of support as needed. In addition to teaching students about behavior and social thinking, the programs also support teachers in using positive reinforcement. Different levels of behavioral support are available to students with IEPs and 504 plans.
PT	Physical therapy (PT) is a related service provided to children with qualifying disabilities to support them in accessing the curriculum. Some of the skills that a school-based physical therapist may work on include gross motor skills, postural control, balance, strength and stability, motor control, endurance, and functional mobility. They also provide support to the teacher and other team members regarding equipment and accessibility within the classroom.

PWN	Prior Written Notice (PWN) is a notice of action that a child’s parent or caregiver is entitled to under the IDEA before the school makes any changes to the student’s IEP or related services, including referrals for assessment. A PWN must be provided to the parent in writing using their native language, and explain in detail why the change is being recommended or, if it’s regarding a parent request, why it’s being accepted or denied. The school has 15 days to provide PWN before any change is made to the student’s IEP, and 20 days to respond to a parent’s request for a change.
RDI	Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) is a family-centered therapeutic program for children with autism that focuses on building social and emotional skills.
RTI	Response to Intervention (RTI) is a proactive approach to identify students who need learning and behavior supports. The teacher assesses the skills of everyone in the general education class, and students who are struggling are provided with interventions to assist them. These services can be provided by general education teachers, special education teachers, and other specialists. Student progress is closely monitored, and decisions are based on data taken over time. RTI uses a multi-tiered approach to differentiate instruction for all students.
SAI	Specialized academic instruction (SAI) is a way of delivering instructional services to students with disabilities, and is individualized based on the students’ needs. This term can be used to describe instructional services on the IEP, and is interchangeable with “Specially Designed Instruction,” which is found in federal regulations. Like all aspects of the IEP, SAI (including minutes) is determined by the IEP team.
SAS	Supplementary Aids and Services (SAS) are the supports that are provided to children with disabilities to allow them to be educated with their typical peers to the maximum extent appropriate. These often include accommodations and modifications, direct services and support, and support and training for staff who work with the child. What is appropriate for one child might not be feasible for another, so determining these supports must be done on an individual basis.
SELPA	A Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) is a group within a

	geographical region of a school district that develops a plan for how that area will provide special education services. Parents, students, and staff ensure through the SELPA that appropriate services are provided on an individual basis for every child with a disability. SELPAs encourage coordination between general and special education and work with other public and private agencies to support special education services for students.
SDC	A Special Day Class (SDC) is a self-contained special education class that provides services to students with needs that cannot be met by the general education program or by Resource Specialist or Designated Instructional Services support.
SI/SIT	Sensory integration (SI) is the way our brain receives and processes sensory information (the things we see, smell, taste, hear, and feel). Sensory processing disorder (SPD) occurs when an individual is either hypersensitive or hyposensitive to sensory information. Sensory integration therapy (SIT) is designed to help children who struggle with sensory input by using deep pressure, brushing, weighted vests, and swinging, among other (usually play-based) therapies.
SLD	One of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a child for an IEP, a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is a broad category signifying learning differences that impact a child’s ability to do one or more of the following: read, write, listen, speak, reason, and do math. Dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and auditory processing disorder are all considered specific learning disabilities.
SLI	Speech and Language Impairment (SLI) is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a child for an IEP, and describes a communication disorder that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Some examples include stuttering, articulation issues, language impairment, and voice impairment.
SLP/ SLPA	A Speech Language Pathologist assesses, diagnoses, and treats speech, language, communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults. They provide training and education to family and caregivers and other professionals. A Speech-Language Pathologist Assistant (SLPA) works under the direction of a supervising SLP; they can work directly with students to conduct screenings for speech, hearing, or

	language disorders.
SST	A Student Success Team (SST) is made up of teachers, parents, and support staff (such as school psychologists, speech therapists, resource specialists, and others) who work with students at risk of academic failure to develop a plan to assist them. Students are referred by parents, teachers, or other school personnel; along with the SST coordinator, the person making the referral determines who makes up the team for each student. The idea behind an SST is that a collaborative approach can help identify interventions to help the student succeed.
STO	Short Term Objectives (STOs; also called benchmarks) describe the interim steps needed to reach an annual IEP goal, and serve as a gauge to monitor a child’s progress. Note that STOs used to be required in every child’s IEP; now, they are only required for children with disabilities who qualify for alternate assessments. However, you can ask that STOs be included in your IEP goals.
TBI	One of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a child for an IEP, traumatic brain injury (TBI) results from head trauma that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.
UDL	Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) to optimize teaching and learning for all students, including those with diverse needs. Based on scientific insights and research about how people learn, UDL designs accessibility into lessons rather than adapting and modifying lessons for different students after the fact. It extends the concept of universal design (that everyone benefits when designs incorporate the needs of every user) into education, making it accessible from the start.
VIB	Visual impairment including blindness (VIB) is one of the 13 diagnoses that qualifies a child for an IEP. It describes vision issues that cannot be corrected with corrective eyewear.