Special Education

Alphabet Soup:

A Guide to Special Education Acronyms and Terms

Special Education is filled with MANY acronyms and buzzwords that can be confusing. PPMD has created this guide to help you understand these important terms, whether you are new to the world of special education or a seasoned professional.

Acronym or Term	What It Means
Accommodations	"Practices and procedures that provide students with disabilities equitable access during instruction and assessment in the areas of presentation of content, student response, setting for instruction, and schedule (MSDE 2019)" **Accommodations are supports that help a student with a disability participate in learning and show what they know without changing what they are expected to learn.**
ADA	**Americans with Disabilities Act** - A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in the areas of employment, public transportation, services provided by state and local government, services and accommodations offered by private businesses, and telecommunication access for people with communication impairments.
Alternate Academic Achievement Standards	**Learning expectations designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.** These standards are connected to grade level content but are adjusted to match the student's individual learning needs. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) determines if alternate academic achievement standards are appropriate.
Annual Review	**The IEP team is required to meet at least once a year to review progress and to update the IEP** including setting new goals and objectives for the new IEP year, as well as to make any changes to the IEP to meet the child's changing needs.
Assessment	**Tests given to a child** by qualified professionals **to determine the child's current academic levels** in such areas as math, reading, and spelling.

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BIP	**Behavioral Intervention Plan** (sometimes referred to as a Behavior Management Plan or a Behavior Support Plan). A BIP includes practical and specific strategies, and positive supports designed to increase or reduce any behavior that impacts a student's learning or the learning of others.
Child Find	**Child Find requires all school districts to identify, locate and evaluate all children from birth to age 21 who are suspected of having disabilities**, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. It includes all children who live in the state including those who attend private school, public school, home schooled, migrant and homeless children, and children who are wards of the state.
Child Outcome Summary (COS)	**A process used in Maryland to measure child outcomes.** This process is done in order to meet federal accountability reporting requirements for all children receiving services through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or preschool IEP. Three outcomes are listed for children to become active, successful participants: positive social emotional skills, learning and use of knowledge and skills, and using appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.
COMAR	**Code of Maryland Regulations** issued by governing State agencies.
Compensatory Services	Compensatory services are **additional services provided to make up for special education or related services that were missed or not provided as required**. The purpose is to help the student regain lost learning opportunities and make the progress they would have been expected to make if the services had been provided as planned.
Complaint (State Complaint)	This is **a formal complaint to the Maryland State Department of Education** alleging that the local education agency did not follow Special Education rules, and/or did not provide the services listed in a student's IEP.
DEI/SES	**Division of Early Intervention/Special Education Services** - Provides technical assistance, and resource management to local school systems, public agencies, and stakeholders. Uses a comprehensive system of coordinated services to children and students with disabilities, birth through 21, and their families.

Due Process	**A written complaint filed by the parent or public agency when consensus cannot be reached** concerning a student's identification, evaluation, placement and/or provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
Early Intervention Services (EIS)	**Various services provided by public and private agencies to support eligible children** and their families to enhance a child's potential for growth and development **from age birth to three**. For the extended option, it covers ages three through five until Kindergarten age.
Elopement	**"Elopement" refers to the act of a student leaving the school campus without the permission** of a school staff member who has responsibility for the student.
Emergency IEP Meeting	**An IEP meeting that needs to be held as soon as possible either due to safety or other urgent concerns.** There is no mandated timeline for emergency IEP meetings, but typically they are held in under 30 days.
Equity in Education	**Student supports and services that are intentional, student/family-centered and applied differentially to ensure equal opportunity and outcomes.** Equitable access for students with disabilities includes making content accessible, having activities that encourage student engagement and ensuring students can communicate their knowledge and skills (MSDE 2019).
ESY	**Extended School Year services.** Services provided to a student beyond the normal school year and at no cost to the family. ESY eligibility is an IEP Team decision.
Evaluation	An evaluation is **a process completed by trained professionals to understand your child's strengths, challenges, and learning needs**. Information from assessments, observations, school records, and parent and teacher input helps determine whether your child has a disability, qualifies for special education services, and what supports, services, and goals are needed to help them succeed in school.
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	(Formerly known as the No Child Left Behind Act.) **Federal law signed in 2015 that governs the US Federal Education policy (K-12).**

FAPE	**Free Appropriate Public Education.** "A cornerstone of IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act], our nation's special education law, is that each eligible child with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet the child's unique needs and that prepares the child for further education, employment, and independent living" (https://www.parentcenterhub.org/fapebrief-ref-list-fape/)"
FBA	**Functional Behavior Assessment -** A process used to understand why a child is showing a behavior and what supports can help reduce the behavior and improve success at school.
General Education Curriculum	"…**the curriculum that is based on a State's academic content standards** for the grade in which a child is enrolled (OSERS, Nov 2015)."
IDEA	**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** This is the name of the federal law that guarantees all children with disabilities the right to a free appropriate public education.
IEP	The "**Individualized Education Program** provides the diagnostic-prescriptive tool to implement specifically designed instruction (MSDE 2019)." **The document describes what special education and related services your child is to receive.**
IEP Team	This team must include; 1) **the parent** 2) **a regular education teacher** 3) **a special education teacher** 4) **a representative from the public agency** (usually the vice principal or other administrator) 5) **individual(s) who can interpret evaluation results** 6) **individuals who the parent and/or school can invite** who have special knowledge or special expertise related to the student, and 7) **the student who is 14 years old or older.**

IFSP	**Individualized Family Service Plan -** A written plan to provide early intervention and other services to eligible children ages birth through three and their families. Includes services needed to develop the child and family's capacity to meet child's needs. Plan is developed by the family and professionals working together and is based upon assessments as required by law. In Maryland, the IFSP can be extended until Kindergarten.
Infants & Toddlers Program	This is the early intervention amendments to IDEA. **It is the statewide program that requires services for children from birth to three years of age**, including an individualized family service plan (IFSP) and case management services. Each county administers this program differently. Also called Part C.
LBHA	**Local Behavioral Health Administration** - a local organization in each county and Baltimore City that helps connect children, youth, and adults to mental health and substance use services in their community. The LBHA works with families, schools, healthcare providers, and community agencies to help people find the behavioral health services and supports that they need. It also helps plan and coordinate behavioral health resources.
LCT	**Local Care Team -** A group of professionals from different agencies who work together to help children and families with complex needs. The team helps families identify available supports, coordinate services across agencies, and find resources in the community. Parents can refer their child to an LCT when they need help accessing services or when their child's needs cannot be met by one agency alone.
LEA	**Local Education Agency -** The LEA is the public school district (your county or Baltimore City) that is responsible for making sure your child receives the educational services and supports they need.
LICC	**Local Interagency Coordinating Council -** The LICC is a team of families and professionals that helps make sure young children with developmental needs and their families have access to quality early intervention services in their community.
LMB	**Local Management Board - A** local organization that helps bring together services and supports for children and families. They work with schools and community agencies to connect families to resources such as mental health services, family support programs, after-school programs, and other community services that can help children succeed.

LRE	**Least Restrictive Environment -** All children with disabilities have a right to be educated in the least restrictive environment, that is, with classmates without disabilities as much as appropriate. The IEP team decides what supports and services the student needs to be successful and only considers more specialized settings if the student's needs cannot be met in a less restrictive setting.
LSS	**Local School System** (see LEA)
Manifestation Determination Review	**A meeting to determine whether a student's behavior was connected to their disability** before certain disciplinary actions, including repeated suspensions that create a pattern of removals, can be taken.
Mediation	**A confidential, voluntary process that allows parents and schools to resolve disputes without a formal due process hearing.** This is the process of having a trained neutral person try to help parents and the school system reach an agreement. Both the school and the parent have to agree to mediation.
Modification(s)	**Changes and/or alternatives to what is taught and/or what the student is expected to learn.**
MSDE	**Maryland State Department of Education -** The state agency that is responsible for monitoring local education agencies and for making sure that these agencies follow state and federal laws.
Multidisciplinary IFSP Team	**A parent and two or more individuals from separate professions who help to coordinate services of an IFSP.** One individual must be a service coordinator from an agency.
Natural Environment	**The home or other community places that are natural or typical for an infant, toddler, or preschooler to be.** Applicable to IFSP participants.
Non-Public School Placement	**This occurs when a student is placed at a school that is outside of the local school district that is paid for by the local education agency**, usually through the IEP process, **because the student's educational needs cannot be appropriately met in the district's programs**. The local school system pays for the placement when it is determined that the non-public school is necessary for the student to receive an appropriate education. The goal of a non-public school placement is to provide the specialized services, supports, and educational environment a student needs to make meaningful progress.

Non-Public Special Education School	**A school that provides specialized instruction and support for students with disabilities whose needs cannot be fully met in their local public school.** These schools offer specialized programs, services, and staff to help students learn, develop skills, and make progress both academically and socially. When a student's IEP team determines that a non-public special education school is the most appropriate setting, the local school system may fund the placement so the student can receive the support they need to succeed.
OT	**Occupational Therapist.** OTs can address a variety of needs including, but not limited to: sensory integration/processing, fine motor skills, feeding, attention, and self-help skills.
Parentally Placed	**This occurs when a parent(s)/guardian(s) choose not to enroll their child in their local public school and instead selects another educational option**, such as a private school, religious school, or home school program. In these situations, the parent is responsible for choosing the educational setting they believe best meets their child's needs.
Parental Rights Maryland Procedural Safeguards Notice	**A document detailing a parent's rights and procedural safeguards regarding special education in Maryland.**
Part B	**Part B of IDEA includes children and youth ages three through 21** who receive special education and related services under federal law. Children, if eligible, transition from Part C to Part B.
Part C	**Part C of IDEA is called the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program and covers ages birth through three.** It is a comprehensive statewide program of early intervention services coordinated by Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Each county coordinates services provided by education, health care, and social services agencies and private providers.
Periodic Review	**A review of the IFSP done every six months,** or more frequently if needed, or at the family's request.

PLAAFP	The section of the IEP that documents a student's ***Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance*** **describes how a student is currently performing in school, including their strengths, needs, and the impact of their disability on learning and participation**. It is based on multiple sources of information, such as evaluations and assessments, classroom observations, work samples, progress data, and input from parents, teachers, and related service providers. This information helps the IEP team develop appropriate goals, services, and supports for the student.
Placement	**The type of special education program and supports that a student receives to meet their unique needs.** It is the level of services and educational environment where those services will be provided rather than a specific school or classroom.
Present Levels	(see PLAAFP)
PT	**Physical Therapy -** can address a variety of needs including, but not limited to: gross motor skills, safe navigation of the physical school environment, access to the learning environment, and maximizing independence.
PTI	**Parent Training and Information Center.** For the state of Maryland, it is The Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD).
PWN	**Prior Written Notice -** The school district must give you a written notice in a language you understand whenever the school district: 1) proposes to begin, change the identification, evaluation or educational placement of your child or the access of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE); 2) refuses to begin or change the identification, evaluation or educational placement of your child or access to FAPE. It must also include a description of the assessments used in deciding to propose or refuse the action.
Related Services	**Services that support a student who requires special education services**, to help a student participate in school and benefit from their special education program. These services are based on the student's individual needs and may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, transportation, or other supports that help the student be successful at school.

Screening	**A quick check used to identify students who may need additional support with learning, behavior, communication, or development.** Screening does not determine whether a student has a disability. Instead, it helps decide whether more information or a full evaluation may be needed.
SEA	**State Education Agency -** The Maryland State Department of Education is Maryland's state education agency.
SECAC	**Special Education Citizens' Advisory Council -** Each county has a council that works with the special education system to address student needs. Made up of parents and LEAs, and other special education administrators who come together to discuss special education needs in their county.
Section 504	**A federal civil rights law that protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination by schools and other organizations that receive federal funding.** It helps ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to education by providing accommodations and supports that meet their individual needs. Simply put: **Section 504 makes sure students with disabilities have the same opportunities to participate and succeed in school as their peers.**
Service Coordinator/Case Manager	**An individual of the early intervention team who coordinates and facilitates the early intervention services** and supports the family through the IFSP process. This person demonstrates an understanding of special education laws.
Service Provider	**An individual who works for a public or private agency to provide early intervention services** for an eligible child and the family.
SESAC	**Special Education State Advisory Council -** Established under IDEA and are required by federal law. Responsible for improving the delivery of special education services for all students with disabilities in working with MSDE and DEI/SES.
SICC	**State Interagency Coordinating Council -** A statewide team that helps make sure Maryland's early intervention system works well for young children and families.
SLP	**Speech Language Pathologist -** Can address a variety of needs including, but not limited to: articulation, language, fluency, feeding, and communication development to facilitate learning.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)	**"Adapting, as appropriate, to the needs of an eligible child the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction** to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and to ensure access to the general education curriculum (34 CFR 300.39 (b)(3))."
Supplementary Aids and Services	**Individualized tools, accommodations, supports, or staff assistance to help a student participate in the general education environment** as much as possible so they can learn alongside their peers and participate in school activities as much as possible.
Supports	**Strategies, services, accommodations, or tools that help a student succeed in school and make progress toward their educational goals.** Supports are based on the student's individual needs and can help with learning, communication, behavior, organization, or participation in school activities.
Wandering	**The act of leaving a safe area or the supervision of a responsible caregiver without permission,** and with little or no awareness of the potential danger.