

# Common Words and Acronyms Used in Special Education

## *Demystifying special education terminology*

504 Plan: A plan ensuring a student with a disability receives accommodations to access education under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Annual Goals: Measurable goals that the child is expected to achieve within a year.

Accommodations: Changes in how a student learns the material (extra time on tests, etc.).

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A plan that outlines strategies and supports to address specific behavior issues.

Due Process: A formal process for resolving disputes between parents and school districts.

Evaluation: A process to determine if a child has a disability. Results are used to determine if a student is eligible for special education services.

Extended School Year (ESY): Special education services provided during school breaks to prevent regression of skills.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): The right for students with disabilities to receive education tailored to their needs at no cost to families.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): A process to assess the causes of a student's behavior and to develop appropriate interventions.

Inclusion: The practice of educating students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers in the same classroom.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): A federal law ensuring that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A written plan developed by a team of individuals to ensure that a child with a disability receives the specialized instruction and related services needed to meet their unique learning needs.

IEP Team: The group of people responsible for developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP. This team typically consists of: parent, general education teacher, special education teacher, school administrator, an individual who can interpret evaluation results (often a school psychologist), any involved related service providers, and the student (when appropriate)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The principle that students with disabilities should be educated in the most inclusive setting possible while meeting the individual needs of each student.

Modifications: Changes in what a student is expected to learn (simplifying content, etc.).

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): A framework for providing increasingly intensive levels of support to students who are struggling academically or behaviorally.

Occupational Therapy (OT): Therapy to assist students in developing skills for daily tasks, such as fine motor skills, social skills, and sensory integration.

Placement: Refers to where a child's educational program will be delivered, such as in a general education classroom or a specialized setting.

Physical Therapy (PT): Therapy to help students improve physical mobility, coordination, and motor skills.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): A framework for creating positive school environments and promoting positive behavior.

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP): A description of the child's current abilities and needs.

Prior Written Notice (PWN): A legal document schools must provide to parents explaining proposed changes to a child's special education program.

Progress Monitoring: Regular assessment to track a student's progress toward meeting their goals.

Related Service: Services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy that are necessary to help a child with a disability benefit from special education.

Response to Intervention (RTI): A component of MTSS that focuses on academic interventions.

Special Education (SPED): Services provided to students with disabilities to support their academic and developmental needs.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC): A group of individuals, primarily parents of students with disabilities, who provide input and advice to a school district on special education programs and services.

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP): A professional working with students to address communication disorders.

Student Support Team (SST): A team of school professionals addressing a student's academic or behavioral difficulties before special education is considered.

Transition Services: Planning and services designed to prepare students with disabilities for life after high school, including employment and independent living.

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE): The state agency responsible for overseeing all educational programs in Virginia.