

Defining Terms Used by Parents and Teachers

Accommodations provide different ways for students to acquire information or communicate their knowledge back to you. The changes basically don't alter or lower the standards or expectations for a subject or test. Preferred seating in the front of the class, oral testing, and additional time for testing are examples.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requires schools to show progress in reading/language arts and math on the individual education plan goals and objectives.

Assistive Technology (AT) is defined by IDEA as follows: "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability. It includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices. **Low tech** encompasses equipment that is often low cost such as adapted paper, pencil grips, color overlays for reading, adapted books, page turners, communication boards, switches activated by pressure, sound or voice, cushions, standing tables, and adapted seating. **High tech** supports involve the use of electronic devices and computers with accompanying software that provides access or a way to communicate. Software supports for writing include the use of auditory feedback while keyboarding, word prediction for spelling, and speech to text. Supports for reading include the use of text to speech (TTS) software and font modification. It can also include touch screens and alternate keyboards. IDEA states that school districts must consider assistive technology for any child in special education. That means that for any child receiving special education services, the educational team must ask if there is a device or adaptation that will "increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities" of that child. If the answer is yes to an assessment by a qualified evaluator then the school district must provide certain services.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is a part of the IEP that identifies supports and services that will be provided to prevent inappropriate behaviors from occurring and to support desired behaviors. It is a living document that can be updated at any time and must be changed if there is no progress in changing the behavior. It is legally binding since it is part of the ARD.

Best practices are research-based practices that demonstrate the best environment and strategies to teach students. There is nothing binding or forcing a school or class to include all "best practice" practices.

Continuums/Texas Education Agency Curriculum Framework provide teachers and parents with the developmental list of skills needed to achieve higher learning. The Curriculum Framework documents for grades 3 and above list access points in the form of prerequisite skills that link to the students expectations on the Vertical Alignment documents for each grade and subject or high school course.
<http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/special-ed/staaralt/frameworks/>

Curriculum is a planned sequence of instruction such as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills that are expected to be taught in Texas schools.

Diplomas are identical for all students in the state of Texas regardless of the graduation plan.

Educational determination of a disability is determined by a multidisciplinary team (school professionals and the parents), is based on federal and state laws and regulations, allows only 13 disability categories to be considered, considers a medical diagnosis in relation to learning problems and behaviors in an educational setting, and recommends services to enable access to the general curriculum.

Educational need is when as a result of the disability, the child needs special education services or related services to benefit from education. Lack of personnel or money cannot be a reason to deny needed services. However, it must be needed for educational progress. This does not mean that your child will necessarily receive as much therapy or services as you think is necessary. An evaluation is conducted and goals to support learning are written. This does not mean that you will get the Cadillac version (daily speech). The districts have to only provide the "Chevy" version.

Formal assessments are formal, research-based tests administered by professional, trained staff that are designed to evaluate a variety of cognitive and behavioral characteristics in order to best serve the student's needs in an academic setting. The testing cannot happen without parent consent. The parent can disagree with the results, accept the results, or ask for further testing. The testing has to be complete within 45 days.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a problem-solving process for addressing behavior problems. It relies on various assessments and observations to identify the purposes of specific behavior and guides the ARD committee to recommendations for strategies to address the behavior.

Graduation Plans are the requirements to meet certain levels of achievement that will be reflected on a student's transcript. This will affect their ability to enter a four or two year college. The transcript will reflect meeting minimum requirements or earning endorsements with extended classes.

Inclusion is not a term used by IDEA. However, IDEA does require school districts to place students in the least restrictive environment (LRE). LRE means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, school districts must educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and supports, referred to as "supplementary aids and services," along with their nondisabled peers in the school they would attend if not disabled, unless a student's individualized education program (IEP) requires some other arrangement. This requires an individualized inquiry into the unique educational needs of each disabled student in determining the possible range of aids and supports that are needed. Some supplementary aids and services that educators have used successfully include modifications to the regular class curriculum, assistance of an itinerant teacher with special education training, special education training for the regular teacher, use of computer-assisted devices, provision of note takers, and use of a resource room, to mention a few.

- See more at: http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/lre_faqs_inclusion.htm - sthash.hdhVi1T5.dpuf

Least restrictive environment (LRE) means the most mainstream environment, or as typical as possible and appropriate for the student. The ARD Committee will look at where the student accesses the curriculum, what his or her goals are, and what supports he or she needs for success. Then, the team decides which learning environment is appropriate to deliver the student's needed curriculum and support. The ARD committee must consider general education placements with necessary supports first before justifying something different from (i.e., more restrictive) what the typical student placement would be. LRE dictates that the child attend his home campus or as close to home as possible if he did not have a disability.

Legal rights are laws, federal, state, and local, that defines what a school must practice. This includes compliance-orientated issues such as data to make decisions, not offering all services on the IEP or delivering all the instruction listed in the IEP, placement, etc. To determine if something is a violation of the law, call Texas Education Agency, toll free parent information line, 1 -800-252-9668.

Leveled Readers provide curriculum content that is "leveled" – a system of establishing text difficulty by evaluating features such as language use, sentence structure, story elements and more. Once assessments determine the level at which a student reads, books are matched to that level - books that are challenging enough for the student to make progress, but not so difficult they cause frustration. It does not matter which leveled readers are used to implement strategies for reading. The most important consideration is that the student has the opportunity to be reading at a level that he will find success. Leveled readers may be subject specific such as for science or social studies, or general topics/fun reading. Many companies offer leveled readers such as Rigby, Scholastic, Time/Life, and National Geographic.

Medical diagnosis is made by a physician based on an assessment of symptoms and diagnostic tests. The diagnosis may or may not consider learning problems within the educational setting. A doctor cannot determine if a child meets the educational definition for eligibility.

Modifications mean that **the curriculum and/or instruction are changed and expectations are not the same as for the other students**. When modifications are made, what students learn is a fundamentally altered or lowered instructional level as compared to other students. For high school students, this can mean that their transcript will reflect this and may affect their ability to enter some colleges. Examples could include alternative books and tests that require less knowledge than typical peers are responsible to acquire.

Present Levels of Academic Performance and Functional Performance is the foundation on which the Individual Education Plan is built. It should reflect, with data, the present level that a student is performing at academically and functionally. It includes information about how your child's disability affects his or her involvement in the general education curriculum. This is what determines the goals and objectives and ultimately placement decisions based on the level and needs of the student. A good PLAAFP includes what helps your child learn;

- What limits or interferes with your child's learning;
- Objective data from current evaluations of your child; and
- How your child's disability affects his or her ability to be involved and progress in the general education curriculum

Programs/Curriculums are products that are sold or available to teach a skill or knowledge, and may be research based, following a specific plan with specific materials. For example, the PCI Reading Program is a scientifically research-based curriculum created specifically to teach students with developmental disabilities, autism, and significant learning disabilities to read. It is a specific program, however, the strategies employed can be used with other materials to achieve the same end or a different program with the same basic philosophy and teaching strategies. You cannot list a specific program in the ARD to be implemented. It may not facilitate student growth even if it is researched based so schools have to be able to draw upon other resources.

State Assessments are tests required by the state to be given to all students to evaluate learning. In Texas this is the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. The ARD committee may determine that the standard test is not appropriate since it requires testing of grade-level expectations. The ARD committee may determine the student should take the STAAR Alternate evaluation based on meeting the requirements. Students must receive instruction for the test that will be administered.

Strategies are the various instructional activities used to engage students with the material and enable them to meet the objectives. Strategies are not tied to a specific set of books, manipulatives, or materials. Strategies include role play, music, storytelling, movement to remember and learn material, pair and share, flashcards, visuals, chunked work, sight words, frequent practice, errorless learning. An example would be the Down syndrome Reading and Language Intervention. It is a grouping of strategies that allows children with Down syndrome to learn better, not a program to purchase.

Transcripts are the records for each student reflecting who has completed a minimum, recommended, advanced (distinguished), or foundation high school program. The words “academic achievement record” and “transcript” are interchangeable. This is what colleges review for admissions.