

Alphabet Soup: A Glossary of Terms and Acronyms in Special Education

Assistive Technology:* “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 the functional capabilities of children with disabilities. Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.”



Evaluation:* “A full and individualized evaluation of a child’s needs must be conducted before any action is taken with respect to the initial placement of a child with special needs in a special education program. Eligibility of children must be determined by using multiple sources of data and must not be dependent upon single test scores. Evaluation procedures may include, but are not limited to, observations, interviews, behavior checklists, structured interactions, play assessment, adaptive and developmental scales, criterion-referenced and norm referenced instruments, clinical judgment, and tests of basic concepts; or other techniques and procedures as deemed appropriate by the professional(s) conducting the evaluations.”

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):* “. . . the term ‘free appropriate public education’ means special education and related services which:

- 1) are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge;
- 2) meet the standards of the state education agency; and
- 3) are provided in conformity with an individualized education program for students with disabilities, group education program for the academically gifted or written educational program for the pregnant.”

Inclusion: Inclusion refers to the use of support services such as a revised curriculum or additional teachers in order to place special education students in a regular classroom setting.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): Once a child has been identified as having a learning disability, an Individualized Education Plan is developed which establishes learning goals for the child and describes the services the school will provide. By law, the IEP should be reviewed every year and should be individualized to meet the needs of the student.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Federal law passed by Congress that requires that all states must provide individuals aged 3–21 with a “free appropriate education” in the “least restrictive environment.” IDEA also defined the process for identifying students with learning disabilities and determining if they are eligible for receiving special education services.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):* Least restrictive environment means that every effort should be made to include children with special needs in regular classroom settings with general education students. “After examining all alternatives for placement within an educational system, children with special needs shall be placed where they can obtain the appropriate educational services which meet their individual educational/developmental needs as close to and as nearly like a regular classroom setting as possible.”

Local Educational Agency (LEA):* “. . . , the term ‘local educational agency’ refers to the following:

- 1) All 118 city and county school administrative units as separate local educational agencies;
- 2) Department of Health and Human Services as one local educational agency. All schools, hospitals and agencies providing educational programs and/or services will be considered

schools or programs under this local educational agency; and

- 3) Department of Correction as one local educational agency. All prisons providing educational programs or services will be considered programs under this local educational agency."

Mainstreaming: Mainstreaming refers to placing special education students in a regular classroom setting without any support services such as a revised curriculum or additional teachers.

Pull out programs: Programs that call for special education students to be removed from a regular classroom setting and placed in classes with other special education students.

Special Education*: "Special education is a specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of the exceptional child, including classroom instruction, instruction in physical education, home instruction, instruction in hospitals and institutions, and instructions in other settings."

Transition*: "Transition is a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promote movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation."

—Anna Levinsohn

* Source: *N.C. Department of Public Instruction, Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Special Needs, May 1998.*

with special needs receive high quality services? How can the needs of these children be balanced against the needs of children who do not have diagnosed disabilities that interfere with learning? The Center explores these issues in depth in this theme issue of *North Carolina Insight* on children with special needs.

John Manuel, a Durham free-lance writer who has a son with a learning disability, explores a range of issues in educating children with special needs, including implementing least restrictive environment requirements through inclusion of special needs students in the regular classroom, issues involving identification of children with special needs, teacher training, the impact of the state's new ABC school accountability program on children with special needs, and issues concerning how special needs children are disciplined. Ann McColl, a Raleigh lawyer concentrating on education law, policy, and government relations, discusses and evaluates dispute settlement processes that are available when parents and school officials disagree about how a special needs child can best be educated. And S. D. Williams, a former staff psychologist and special education teacher at John Umstead Hospital in Butner, N.C., discusses cost issues in educating children with special needs, including how dollars are allocated between state institutions and community-based organizations with regard to the number of special needs children served. Finally, *Insight* editor Mike McLaughlin writes about school systems, individual schools, or other programs that seem to be doing an exceptional job in educating children with special needs.

A question that threads its way through all of these articles is this: What lessons can be learned that will give more children with special needs "a fair and full opportunity" to reach their full potential through public education?

FOOTNOTES

¹ Public Law 105-17, codified in 20 U.S. Code Chapter 33.

² N.C.G.S. 115C-106(a).

³ Frederick West, *Addressing the Challenge of Special Education Finance Reform in North Carolina*, N.C. Department of Public Instruction, November 1994, p. 1 ff.

⁴ Public Law 93-112.

⁵ Chapter 1293 of the 1977 Session Laws (2nd Session, 1974), now codified as N.C.G.S. 115C-106(a).

⁶ Public Law 94-142, now codified as 20 U.S. Code Chapter 33, Section 1412(a)(1)(A).

⁷ Chapter 927 of the 1977 Session Laws, now codified as N.C.G.S. 115C-106 *et seq.*

⁸ N.C.G.S. Chapter 115C, Article 9B.

⁹ Public Law 105-17, now codified as 20 U.S. Code Chapter 33, Section 400 *et seq.*

¹⁰ 34 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 300.