

Supporting Students with Disabilities:

Glossary of Key Terms

Accommodations: An accommodation is a change that helps a student overcome or work around their disability without significantly altering the content that the child learns. Allowing a student who has trouble writing to give his answers orally is an example of an accommodation. This student is still expected to know the same material, and answer the same questions as fully as the other students, but he doesn't have to write his answers to show that he knows the information.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A BIP is an improvement plan that identifies how the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team will implement strategies, interventions, and supports to reduce or extinguish problematic behaviors that are interfering with a student's progress toward his or her goals. The plan should include positive strategies, program modifications, and supplementary aids and supports that are designed to reduce or eliminate the student's problem behaviors and allows the child to be educated in the least restrictive environment. The BIP is developed based on multiple sources of data that are summarized in a functional behavior assessment.

Community-Based Instruction (CBI): CBI is an evidence-based method for teaching, in real-life settings and under the supervision of educators, the skills that some students with disabilities will need to function as productive adults. CBI programs are hands-on and are implemented during trips to community locations. A critical component of CBI is the involvement of parents and other members of the community such as businesses and teachers.

Continuum of Services: The range of special education and related services that must be available to every student in a school or school system so that he or she can be served in the least restrictive environment.

Coordinated Early Intervention Services (CEIS): LEAs identified as having significant disproportionality in identification, placement, and/or disciplinary removals must use IDEA Part B funds for CEIS. CEIS are services provided to students who need additional academic and behavioral supports to succeed.

Course of Study: Course of Study is a multi-year listing of courses that the student will take in order to enable him/her to reach his or her postsecondary goals. When preparing the course of study, graduation requirements should be taken into consideration.

Diagnostic Assessment/Screening: Smaller in scope than universal screeners, diagnostic assessments are more in-depth, often administered one-on-one to students, and target specific areas identified by the universal screener or other instructional data. They are typically administered by highly trained staff members who understand the benefits and limits of these tests. Results may be used to identify what the student already knows, the nature of difficulties that they might have and the specific skill area in which the student may require academic or behavioral interventions.

Early Intervention: Early intervention is the process of providing services, education and support, to young children who are deemed to have a delay or disabling condition that may affect their development, or impede their education. Early intervention services are designed to lessen the impacts of the disability or delay in five developmental areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication, social or emotional development, and adaptive development. Services are provided in the child's natural environment, such as the child's home, child care or any other community setting, and are proven to be most effective when started as soon as the delay or disability is identified.

Early Steps: Early Steps provides [Part C](#) services to families with infants and toddlers, ages birth to three years, who have a medical condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who already have a developmental delay identified. Children with delays in cognitive, motor, vision, hearing, communication, social-emotional or adaptive development, may be eligible for these services which are administered by the Louisiana Department of Health.

Executive Functioning: Executive Functioning is an umbrella term for the set of skills involving working memory, flexible thinking, self-regulation and the ability to manage oneself and one's resources. Deficits in executive functioning impact a student's ability to prioritize, strategize, shift from one activity to another, attend to details, control impulses and monitor one's own behavior. This set of skills is crucial for learning and development, yet patterns of weakness in this area are common in students with disabilities, in particular those diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, autism and specific learning disabilities. Students with disabilities can develop these skills when specific strategies and interventions are implemented across settings.

Formal Evaluation: A formal evaluation is a nondiscriminatory, multi-factored evaluation that must be completed within 60 days of the referral to determine whether a child has a disability, and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs. The evaluation is conducted by a multidisciplinary team consisting of individuals who can bring different perspectives and expertise to the evaluation, including appropriate members of the Pupil Appraisal Team, the parent(s), general and special educators, and medical professionals as appropriate. The evaluation must be comprehensive and use evaluation tools and strategies that are technically sound and accepted. Informal observations and documentation of the student's past work, such as data collected during the screening and intervention process, should also be used in determining eligibility. Assessments may not be biased in regard to race, culture, language, or disability. The materials and procedures must be administered in the language and form most likely to provide accurate information on what the child knows and is able to do.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): FBA is a data-collection and analysis process conducted by Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams when students are exhibiting problematic behaviors and may require a behavior plan. The FBA is intended to identify the target behavior, understand the purpose of the behavior, and the factors that maintain the behavior in order to write an effective BIP.

Graduation Pathways: While most students with disabilities in Louisiana will pursue a traditional pathway to a high school diploma, certain students with disabilities have alternative pathways available to them.:

- Students at the high school level, who are eligible under Act 833, can pursue a standard high school diploma by meeting standard graduation requirements through alternate means
- Students at the high school level, who are assessed on the Louisiana Alternate Assessment (LEAP Connect), can pursue a diploma pathway by meeting alternate requirements.

High-Quality Instruction: High-quality instruction is explicit, systematic and responsive to the needs of all students. It includes both evidence-based instructional practices as well as a high-quality curriculum.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) Goals: Measurable academic and functional goals for students with disabilities are developed by the IEP team annually. These goals should be:

- designed to meet the student's needs and enable him or her to be involved in, and make progress, in the general education curriculum;
- directly related to the needs identified in the present level of academic and functional performance (PLAAFP); and
- describe what the student can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a 12-month period given the supports outlined in the IEP.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team: The IEP team, whose membership is defined in Bulletin 1530, is responsible for making educational and programming decisions for a student with a disability.

Intervention: Intervention is an instructional strategy, or method of instruction, implemented for a period of time to produce academic or behavioral changes for a student. Interventions can vary in duration, frequency and intensity. Low-intensity interventions can be implemented by the classroom teacher based on needs identified by universal screeners or formative assessments. More intensive and targeted interventions, such as specific instructional methods or formalized instructional programs, may be required to support students who continue to struggle. These targeted interventions should be:

- research-based;
- provided by trained personnel;
- aligned to a specific area of need;
- identified by diagnostic assessments; and
- implemented in addition to, not in place of, core academic instruction.

The [SBLC](#) should monitor the effectiveness interventions for each student.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): LRE is the legal requirement that a student with a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate. They should have access to the general education curriculum, or any other program that non-disabled peers would be able to access. This is based on the presumption that the general education setting is the first choice for educating all students, including students with disabilities, and that IEP teams should first consider supplemental aids and services to help the student reach his or her goals before considering more restrictive settings. LRE is not contingent on funding issues.

Modifications: Modifications are changes in what is being taught to or expected of the student, so that the student with a disability is not doing the same level of work as his/her non-disabled peers. Modifications, though sometimes appropriate for students with more significant cognitive disabilities, can increase the gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and the expectations for proficiency at a particular grade level. When implementing a special practice or procedure in instruction and assessment, the IEP team should carefully consider whether the practice or procedure maintains the fidelity and rigor of the assignment or the assessment. If it does, it is an accommodation. However, it changes the goal or rigor of the assignment or of what is being assessed, it is a modification.

Part B Services: Part B Services are special education and related services provided through the LEA for school-aged children (ages 3-21) with disabilities (including preschoolers).

Part C Services: Part C Services are early intervention services provided through Early Steps for infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age three and their families.

Person-Centered Planning: Person-centered planning is an ongoing process in which a team of people, including but not limited to the IEP team, help a student with a disability plan for his or her future by defining the life that he/she wants and what supports and services need to be in place to achieve that life.

Postsecondary Transition Plan: The postsecondary transition plan is the section of the IEP that outlines goals and services intended to support the student as he or she transitions out of the K-12 school system. This plan is updated by the IEP team every year beginning no later than the year the student turns 16. Transition planning is based on the student's needs, strengths, skills and interests, and is used to identify and develop goals which need to be accomplished during the current school year to assist the student in meeting his or her postsecondary goals.

Present Level of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP): PLAAFP is the narrative portion of the IEP that synthesizes all information relevant to the child's development and current educational performance, including information about their current functioning and the impact of their disability in relation to appropriate activities. The PLAAFP is the cornerstone of the IEP, serving as a bridge between the evaluation process and measurable, annual goals. The PLAAFP should:

- be stated in terms that are specific;
- measurable and objective;
- describe current performance, not past performance;
- describe the effect of the disability on the child's progress in appropriate activities;
- prioritize and identify needs that will be written as goals;
- identify strengths as they relate to possible interventions;
- provide baseline data for each need; and
- set the measurement method for each goal.

Pupil Appraisal Team: The Pupil Appraisal Team is a multi-disciplinary team that provides support services for students who have academic, behavioral, and/or communication challenges, adjustment difficulties, and/or other special needs that adversely impact educational performance. Pupil Appraisal services include, but are not limited to:

- membership on school-based committees which collect and interpret data and make decisions regarding appropriate intervention services for students;
 - administration and interpretation of screenings and evaluations for academic and behavioral difficulties, including possible eligibility for Special Education services;
 - direct support or related services to students with learning or behavior challenges;
 - assistance with crisis situations; and
 - providing training or information to school personnel on a wide variety of topics.
- Members of the Pupil Appraisal Team may include school psychologists, education diagnosticians, school social workers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, adapted physical education teachers, and school nurses.

Referral: The referral is the official request to begin the formal process of determining if a student is eligible for special education services. Once a referral is provided, the school must obtain consent from the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to begin the evaluation phase of the referral process. Referrals may be made by the **SBLC**, parent, or other persons with knowledge about the student's educational and behavioral needs. In most cases, prior to the referral for a formal evaluation, the SBLC should follow the school's comprehensive screening plan to determine if the student's needs can be met through general education interventions. However, the screening and intervention process should not be used to delay a formal evaluation for a student suspected of having a disability.

Related Services: Related services are the supportive services or activities necessary for some students with disabilities to benefit from, or achieve, the goals set out in their IEP. As with special education, related services are not meant to be a one-size-fits-all solution, nor are they disability specific. Rather, related services should be associated with the student's IEP goals and called out in the IEP. They are intended to help students meet their IEP goals, and are tied to specific educational outcomes, rather than being administered as isolated services.

School Building Level Committee (SBLC): According to the Louisiana State Bulletin 1508,§303, the SBLC is a general education, data driven, decision-making committee whose standing members consist of at least the principal/designee, a classroom teacher, and the referring teacher. In discussing an individual student's difficulties, the student's parent or guardian is an invited participant. The SBLC shall review and analyze all screening data to determine the most beneficial option for the student, including the development and monitoring of a pre-referral intervention plan. The SBLC may refer a student for a formal special education evaluation if interventions alone are not sufficient; however, an IEP team would ultimately determine the need for a formal special education evaluation.

Self-Advocacy: Self-advocacy is a set of skills that enables students with disabilities to take charge of their lives, articulate their needs and make informed decisions about the supports necessary to meet their needs. When applied in the context of Universal Design for Learning, self-advocacy skills may improve persistence, retention and degree attainment.

Self-Determination: Self-determination is a combination of attitudes and abilities that lead people to set goals for their future and take the initiative to reach these goals. Research has shown that students with disabilities who exercise greater self-determination, are more often to find meaningful employment and to live independently after high school.

Specially-Designed Instruction (SDI): Specially-designed instruction is adapted, as appropriate, in content, methodology or delivery to address the unique learning needs of a student with a disability. SDI is defined by the IEP team and is intended to supplement, not to replace, the individualized supports and high-quality instruction provided in the general education setting. SDI is a service, and is not defined by where it occurs.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development, or a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments, that work for everyone. UDL encourages teachers to design lessons that anticipate the needs of all learners, thereby eliminating or reducing barriers to academic success. Initially proposed as a means for including students with disabilities in the general-education classroom, it is now better understood as a general education initiative that improves outcomes for all learners.

Universal Screener: A universal screener is an assessment administered to identify or predict students who may be at-risk for meeting benchmarks or may require additional supports in the classroom. Universal screening assessments are typically brief, conducted with all students in a particular grade level(s), and followed by additional diagnostic assessments or short-term progress monitoring to corroborate students' risk status and the effectiveness of supports/interventions being provided to them.

Work-Based Learning: Work-based learning is a set of supervised, school-coordinated activities that provide opportunities for students to achieve employment-related skills in the workplace. Work-based learning experiences involve assessment of students' interests, aptitudes, and abilities while learning about career possibilities. Work-based learning has been shown to improve students' self-esteem, teach and reinforce basic academic and technical skills, to promote an understanding of workplace culture and expectations, and to develop a network for future job searches¹. Such experiences also expose students to work and career options that would otherwise be unknown to them, which is especially critical to students with disabilities.

1 Bailey & Hughes, 1999; Hoerner & Wehrley, 1995; Wehman, 2001