



Special Education Terms and Acronyms

Ages 3–21

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Accessible Instructional Materials/Accessible Educational Materials	AIM/AEM	Materials that provide the same educational information found in textbooks, pamphlets, etc. in a different format. Examples include Braille, large print, audio, and digital text. (May also be referred to as AIM; AEM is the newer, broader term for accessible materials.)
Accommodation		Accommodations are supports or services provided to assist a student access the general curriculum and demonstrate learning.
Age of Majority		The age at which a student gains the rights to make his/her own decisions, including those related to education. In Iowa, this happens at age 18 or when a person gets married.
Americans with Disabilities Act	ADA	A federal civil rights law that protects people with disabilities at work, school, and in public places.
Area Education Agency	AEA	The state of Iowa is divided into nine AEAs. Each AEA provides local school districts with support and assistance.
Assistive Technology	AT	Any service or device, including software or equipment, that helps people work around their challenges. Examples include pencil grips, test to speech, or word prediction software.
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/Attention Deficit Disorder	ADHD/ADD	A disorder that affects attention, self-control, and may include hyperactivity. This can cause a range of behavior issues such as difficulty attending to instruction, focusing on schoolwork, keeping up with assignments, following instructions, completing tasks and social interaction.
Augmentative and Alternative Communication	AAC	A means of communicating ideas and feelings that does not involve speaking. Examples include sign language, pictures, mobile device, and speech-generating devices.

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Autism Spectrum Disorder	ASD	A condition related to brain development that impacts how a person perceives and socializes with others, causing problems in social interaction and communication.
Behavior Disorder	BD	A disorder which impacts a child's education and social relationships. This may include disorders such as anxiety, disruptive behavioral disorders, emotional disorders, etc.
Behavior Intervention Plan	BIP	A plan designed to increase (reinforce) positive behaviors and decrease problem behaviors. This plan is developed by reviewing the results of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA).
Center for Disease Control and Prevention	CDC	The United States' health protection agency whose focus is to save lives and protect people from health, safety, and security threats.
Child Find		The process used to identify and evaluate students for special education services.
Child Health Specialty Clinics	CHSC	A community-based public health agency located at the University of Iowa, with satellite offices statewide, that serves Iowa children and youth with special health care needs.
Child Outcome Summary Process	COS	<p>A summary of a child's functioning in each of the following three child outcome areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive social-emotional skills, including social relationships • Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, including early language/communication and early literacy • Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs
Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs	CYSHCN	Children and youth who have or are at increased risk of developing chronic conditions and require services beyond those required by others of the same age.
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	DHH	A hearing loss which impacts an individual's life.
Department of Human Services	DHS	<p>Iowa's agency that provides public assistance programs to the state's residents in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance programs • Family services • Health care • Mental health and disability services

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Developmental Delay/Developmental Disability	DD	An impairment in physical, learning, language and/or behavior impacting day-to-day functioning, typically lasting throughout a person's lifetime.
Disability Suspect	DS	A term indicating that a disability is suspected that may be impacting a child's performance in school. This would trigger the need for a Full and Individual Initial Evaluation (IEE).
Division of Child and Community Health, University of Iowa	DCCH	A division of the Carver College of Medicine that focuses on child health with an approach that recognizes the importance of family, school, and community to a child's health.
Early ACCESS	EA	Iowa's system for providing early intervention services for infants and toddlers, birth to age 3, with a developmental delay or disability. This program includes support to parents to help their children learn and grow.
Early Childhood	EC	Services and programs provided to children ages 3–5.
Early Childhood Iowa	ECI	Programs across the state which provide support to achieve proven results for children ages 0–5 and their families.
Early Childhood Outcomes	ECO	<p>The goal of early intervention and early childhood special education is to enable young children with disabilities to be active and successful participants during their early childhood years and in the future. The three Early Childhood Outcomes areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive social-emotional skills (social relationships) • Acquires and uses knowledge and skills (early language/communication) • Uses appropriate behaviors to meet their needs
Early Childhood Special Education	ECSE	Services and supports for children with special needs ages 3–5 that are provided by AEAs and local school districts.
Educational Evaluation Report	EER	A document that shows the results of an initial evaluation used by the team to report their evaluation findings.
Eligible Individual	EI	In Iowa, the term 'eligible individual' is used to describe any student who has been determined to be eligible for special education services and/or supports and who has an IFSP/IEP.

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Emotional Disturbance/ Emotional Disorder/ Emotional Disability	ED	<p>A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to such a degree that it negatively affects a child’s educational performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors • An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers • Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances • A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression • A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems
English Language Learner	EL	A student for whom English is not their first language. This student is in the process of becoming proficient in the English language.
Extended School Year Services	ESY/ESYS	Special education services that are provided to a child with a disability beyond the normal school year and are provided at no cost to the parent or the child.
Family & Educator Partnership	FEP	A program that develops and sustains partnerships between families, educators, and community providers to promote success for all children and youth with disabilities.
Free & Appropriate Public Education	FAPE	Special education and related services that are free and appropriate for a student’s unique needs, guaranteed under IDEA.
Functional Behavioral Assessment	FBA	A process to help understand a child’s problem behavior(s).
Head Start	HS	A program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and families.
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act	HIPAA	A federal law that ensures the confidentiality and security of an individual’s protected health information (PHI).
Independent Educational Evaluation	IEE	An evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the district or AEA. An IEE is completed, per parent request, when the parent disagrees with the results of an evaluation completed by the district or AEA.

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Individual Health Plan	IHP	A document that outlines necessary services to address a student's health needs at school. An emergency health plan may be included if determined necessary by the team.
Individualized Education Program	IEP	A document that outlines the special education goals, services, and supports of a child who has been determined to have a disability and is in need of special education. This document is reviewed annually to determine if changes in services and supports are needed.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	IDEA	A federal law which guarantees the educational rights of individuals with disabilities.
Initial Evaluation/ Child Find		A process to evaluate a child who is suspected of having a disability and who is potentially eligible for special education.
Initial IEP		The IEP that is developed once a child has been determined to have a disability and is in need of special education services.
Intellectual Disability	ID	Significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills.
Iowa Administrative Code	IAC	All rules are adopted and administered by the executive branch agencies to implement state law and policy.
Iowa Department of Education	IDOE/IDE/DE	The education agency in the state of Iowa.
Iowa Department of Public Health	IDPH	A partnership of local public health, non-profit organizations, health care providers, policymakers, businesses, and others working together to protect and improve the health of Iowans.
Iowa IDEA Information	i3	An online and accessible platform for procedures, guidance, and resources related to Early Intervention and Special Education.
Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services	IVRS	Iowa's state vocational rehabilitation program provides individualized services to Iowans with disabilities to achieve their independence through successful employment and economic support.
Learning Disability/ Specific Learning Disability	LD/SLD	An umbrella term for a variety of learning problems. These typically fall into three categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dyslexia (reading issues) • Dysgraphia (writing issues) • Dyscalculia (math issues)
Least Restrictive Environment	LRE	The environment in which a child receives appropriate supports and services while learning with nondisabled peers.

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Local Education Agency	LEA	The local school district.
Modification		Changes made to the context and performance standards for students with disabilities. It changes the playing field for a student.
Occupational Therapy	OT	Provides help for people to fully engage in all aspects of life, including school, work, and play. Examples could be assistance in areas of daily living such as cooking, dressing, eating, or driving.
Office of Special Education Programs	OSEP	A division of the U.S. Department of Education focused solely upon special education.
Other Health Impairment	OHI	A disability that includes limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic health problems. In addition, developmental delays or problems with education performance may result.
Part B		The section of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that outlines the requirements for services to school children ages 3–21.
Physical Therapy	PT	Specially designed exercises and equipment to help people improve or regain their physical abilities.
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports	PBIS	Services and supports to promote and maximize academic achievement and behavioral competence of all students.
Postsecondary Expectations	PSE	A portion of a student's IEP (from age 14 and beyond) that allows for planning beyond high school in the areas of living, learning, and working. This should be based on assessment information, including the student's interests and preferences.
Postsecondary Summary	PSS	Summary of a child's academic achievement and functional performance which includes recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting their postsecondary goals. **This document was formerly known as the SAR (Student Accommodation Request).
Present level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance link	PLAAFP	A section of an IEP that provides a summary of academic achievement and functional performance.
Prior Written Notice	PWN	A written notice to families providing information on the proposed or refused actions as a part of the IFSP/IEP process.

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Procedural Safeguards		Explanation of the specific rights and responsibilities of the family in the special education process. Translations of the manual are available in seven languages: English, Arabic, Bosnian, Laotian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
Reevaluation		An assessment conducted every three years, or as necessary, to determine continued eligibility and the best way to meet the student's learning needs.
Secondary Transition		The process for students, beginning no later than age 14, that focuses on planning for the future in the areas of living, learning, and working.
Special Education	Sp.Ed./Sped	Supports and services provided to eligible individuals to address their unique needs.
Speech Language Pathologist	SLP	An expert in communication who assess, diagnose, and treat individuals with communication and swallowing disorders.
Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs	SWVPP	A preschool program available to Iowa residents, with or without disabilities, who reach age 4 on or before September 15 of the school year.
Transfer of Rights		The act of transferring rights from the parent to the student. This gives the student the right to make his/her own decisions, including those related to education. In Iowa, this happens at age 18 or when a person gets married.
Transition Alliance Program	TAP	A partnership between the LEA and IVRS providing students assistance in the areas of vocational training, independent living, and postsecondary education.
Traumatic Brain Injury	TBI	Sudden damage to the brain caused by a bump, blow, or a jolt to the head. Injuries can range from mild concussions to severe permanent brain damage.
Visual Impairment	VI	Impairment to vision that adversely affects an individual's learning. This includes partial sight and blindness.
Women, Infants, and Children program	WIC	Federal grants provided to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk.