

Common Special Education Terms



Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): a teaching technique used with children who have a diagnosis of autism. Incorporates a behavioral teaching strategy known as discrete trial training (repetitive lessons with data collection, levels of prompting, and positive reinforcement.) Many children with autism receive several hours a week of this one-to-one teaching provided by a Special Education Itinerant Teacher. (SEIT)

Asperger Syndrome: a pervasive developmental disorder that is characterized by impairment of social skills and the presence of atypical and/or repetitive behavior patterns. Intelligence is typically average; however, these individuals struggle with social routines, abstract learning, and problem solving.

Autism: a form of Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) that is characterized by impairments in social, language and cognitive skills. Recent studies have shown that 1 in 150 births result in a child with autism.

Cerebral Palsy: a developmental disorder that is characterized by impairment of movement, balance and posture control. Cerebral Palsy can be caused by a lack of normal fetal brain development or by injury (ie. loss of oxygen) to the brain. Some children with Cerebral Palsy have average intelligence while others exhibit a secondary diagnoses (ie. mental retardation).

Developmental Delay: the term used to describe an infant or child who exhibits a delay in meeting developmental milestones and difficulty acquiring new skills. With intervention, many children learn to compensate for these learning difficulties and catch up to their peers. Without improvement over time, some children labeled developmentally delayed will eventually be given a diagnosis.

Developmental Disability: the term that encompasses mental and/or physical impairments that affect an individual's ability to learn skills and complete daily living tasks. Onset is prior to the age of 18. People with developmental disabilities often have a diagnosis. These include but are not limited to autism, cerebral palsy, and Down Syndrome.

Developmental Milestone: a measured skill in development (sitting up, rolling over, walking, talking, etc...) that is typically achieved by a certain age.

Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21): a genetic developmental disability caused by a chromosomal abnormality. This disability results when an extra chromosome or extra part of that chromosome develops in the body's cells. Characteristics of people with Down Syndrome include low muscle tone, congenital heart defects and varying degrees of mental impairment.

Fine Motor skills: involves tasks completed with small muscle groups, namely tasks requiring hand-eye coordination (ie. grasping, lacing and writing.)

Gross Motor skills: involves tasks completed with large muscle groups or whole body movements. Tasks include sitting, rolling over, walking, and throwing.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): a written document provided for children with special needs mandated by the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. This intervention plan is designed to provide each individual child with the supports, teaching techniques, and objectives needed to meet their educational goals.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): a written document formulated by an inter-disciplinary team (service coordinator, doctors, special educators, physical, occupational, and/or speech pathologists) and the caregivers of a child under the age of three years with a delay in development. Included in the plan are a description of the child's current level of functioning, strengths and needs of the child's family, desired educational outcomes, and goals for both the child and family.

Object Permanence: the comprehension that an object continues to exist even though it cannot be seen, touched, or heard.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD): refers to a spectrum of developmental disorders that are characterized by impairment of communication skills and social interaction. Some examples of disorders on this spectrum are autism, aspergers, PDD-NOS (Not otherwise specified) and Rett syndrome

Related Services: a term used to describe the types of specialized therapies an individual may participate in to remediate delays in development. These include physical, occupational, speech and language, feeding, and play therapies.

Rett Syndrome: a rare form of PDD affecting girls. It is characterized by typical development for approximately the first 18 months of life followed by a rapid, progressive loss of skills.

Sensory Impairment: a condition in which an individual experiences difficulty receiving and interpreting information obtained by one's senses. The terms tactile defensiveness (abnormal reaction or sensitivity to touch) is an example of a sensory impairment.

Special Education Itinerant Teacher: a licensed professional whose responsibility is to implement an IEP for a child and assist their families in understanding the nature of the disability and how to work with their child to achieve their goals.