

NEW MEXICO SPECIAL EDUCATION PRIMER GLOSSARY

Part 1: Acronyms

- **ADA** Americans with Disabilities Act
- **AYP** Adequate Yearly Progress
- **ADHD** Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- **CEC** Council for Exceptional Children
- **CSLC** Charter Schools Leadership Council
- **CSP** Charter Schools Program (of the U.S. Department of Education)
- **ED** U. S. Department of Education
- **EMO** Educational management organization
- **FAPE** Free Appropriate Public Education
- **FERPA** Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
- **FRC** Federal Resource Center
- **504** Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974
- **IDEA** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- **IEP** Individualized Education Program
- **IFSP** Individualized Family Service Plan
- **LEA** Local Education Agency (school district)
- **LRE** Least restrictive environment
- **NACSA** National Association of Charter School Authorizers
- **NAEP** National Assessment of Education Progress
- **NASDSE** National Association of State Directors of Special Education
- **NCLB** No Child Left Behind Act - the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- **NICHCY** National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
- **NMAC** New Mexico Administrative Code
- **NMCCC** New Mexico Coalition for Charter Schools
- **NMPED** New Mexico Public Education Department
- **OCR** Office for Civil Rights
- **OSEP** Office of Special Education Programs
- **PACER** Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights
- **PED** Public Education Department
- **PEC** New Mexico Public Education Commission
- **RRC** Regional Resource Center
- **SAT** Student Assistance Team
- **SEA** State Education Agency

Part 2: Definitions

ACCOMMODATIONS Changes in the administration of an assessment, such as setting, scheduling, timing, presentation format, response mode, or others, including any combination of these, that do not change the construct intended to be measured by the assessment or the meaning of the resulting scores. Accommodations are used for equity, not advantage, and serve to level the playing field. To be appropriate, assessment accommodations must be identified in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan and used regularly during instruction and classroom assessment.

ACHIEVEMENT TEST

An instrument designed to efficiently measure the amount of academic knowledge and/or skill a student has acquired from instruction. Such tests provide information that can be compared to either a norm group or a measure of performance.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts and schools must achieve each year. It is an individual state's measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards required by NCLB.

AGGREGATION

The total or combined performance of all students for reporting purposes.

ALIGNMENT

The similarity or match between or among content standards, performance standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments in terms of knowledge and skill expectations.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

An instrument used in gathering information on the standards-based performance and progress of students whose disabilities preclude their valid and reliable participation in general assessments. Alternate assessments measure the performance of a relatively small population of students—children with the most significant cognitive disabilities—who are unable to participate in the general assessment system, with or without accommodations as determined by the IEP Team. Students participating in alternate assessment must meet specific criteria outlined on the “Alternate Assessment Addendum.” The IEP team must provide documentation to support the decision to have the student participate in the Alternate Assessment.

ASSESSMENT

The process of collecting information about individuals, groups, or systems that relies upon a number of instruments, one of which may be a test. Therefore, assessment is a more comprehensive term than *test*.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

A device or service that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a student with a disability. (See IDEA Regulations at 34 CFR §§ 300.5 and 300.6).

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVE DISORDER (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (also called Attention Deficit Disorder or ADD) is a condition with the principal characteristics of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. It becomes apparent in some children in the preschool and early school years and can continue into adulthood. These symptoms appear early in a child's life. Because many normal children may have these symptoms, but at a low level, or the symptoms may be caused by another disorder, it is important that the child receive a thorough examination and appropriate diagnosis by a well-qualified professional. A student with ADD or ADHD must meet the criteria outlined for “Other Health Impaired” to be eligible for services under IDEA. If the student with ADD or ADHD is not eligible under the IDEA, they may require a 504 plan to address their educational needs.

AUTHORIZER

The office or organization that accepts applications, approves, exercises oversight and, after the period of approval, decides on renewal or revocation of a charter school. Some states use different terms for this role, e.g., sponsor. In New Mexico, the two chartering authorities who may authorize charter schools are the local school board of the school district within which the proposed charter school will be located and the Public Education Commission. (Effective July 1, 2007)

AUTISM

A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal or nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance as defined in 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(4). A child who manifests the characteristics of ‘autism’ after age three could be diagnosed as having autism if the criteria in §300.8(c)(1) are satisfied.

BIAS (test bias)

In a statistical context, bias is a systematic error in a test score. In discussing test fairness, bias is created by not allowing certain groups into the sample, not designing the test to allow all groups to participate equitably, selecting discriminatory material, testing content that has not been taught, etc. Bias usually favors one group of test takers over another, resulting in discrimination.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are independent public schools designed and operated by educators, parents, community leaders, educational entrepreneurs and others. They are authorized by designated local or state educational organizations, who monitor their quality and effectiveness but allow them to operate outside of the traditional system of public schools. Most states use the term "charter school," although there are other terms in use for this type of school, such as "community school" used in Ohio and "public school academies" in Michigan. New Mexico uses the term "charter school."

CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

A child with a disability means a child evaluated in accordance with IDEA as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. (See also STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY)

CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS (CRT)

A test that measures specific skill development as compared to a predefined absolute level of mastery of that skill.

CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Assessments that mirror instructional materials and procedures related to the curriculum resulting in an ongoing process of monitoring progress in the curriculum and guiding adjustments in instruction, remediation, accommodations, or modifications provided to the student.

DEAF-BLINDNESS

A disability characterized by concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness. [34 CFR §300.8(c)(2)].

DEAFNESS

A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. [34 CFR § 300.8(c)(3)].

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

The term child with a disability for children aged 3 through 9 may, at the discretion of the State and LEA and in accordance with 34 CFR §300.111(b), include a child: (1) who is experiencing developmental delays, as defined by the State and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development; and (2) who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. [34 CFR §300.8(b)].

DISAGGREGATED

"Disaggregate" means to separate a whole into its parts. Under NCLB, this term means that test results are sorted into groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency.

EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that affects a child's educational performance: (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance. [34 CFR §300.8(c)(4)].

ERRORS OF MEASUREMENT

The differences between observed scores and the theoretical true score; the amount of uncertainty in reporting scores; the degree of inherent imprecision based on test content, administration, scoring, or examinee conditions within the measurement process that produce errors in the interpretation of student achievement.

EXTENDED STANDARDS

A content standard that has been expanded while maintaining the essence of that standard, thereby ensuring that all students with significant cognitive disabilities have access to, and make progress in, the general curriculum.

FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Free appropriate public education (FAPE) means special education and related services that are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; meet the standards of the state; include preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education and are provided in conformity with an individualized education program (IEP).

HEARING IMPAIRMENT

An impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section. [34 CFR 300.8(c)(5)].

HIGH STAKES TESTING

A test for which important consequences are attached to the results for students, teachers, schools, districts, and/or states. Consequences may include promotion, graduation, rewards, or sanctions.

INCLUSION

Inclusion is a special education approach that stresses educating students with disabilities, regardless of the type of severity of that disability, in the regular classrooms of their neighborhood schools.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

An individualized education program (IEP) is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised in a meeting in accordance with IDEA regulations.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the major federal law related to special education that provides funding to states and sets specific procedural requirements for the identification and education of students with disabilities.

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

The IDEA requires that, to the maximum extent appropriate, school districts must educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE), i.e., in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and supports (referred to as "supplementary aids and services") along with their non-disabled peers in the school they would attend if not disabled, unless a student's individualized education program (IEP) requires some other arrangement.

LINKAGE

The type of connection that is mandated or voluntarily established between a charter school and a traditional LEA.

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA)

A local education agency (LEA) is a public institution (often referred to as a school district) that has administrative control and direction of one or more public elementary or secondary schools, and the term includes a public charter school that is established as an LEA under state law.

MATRIX SAMPLING

A measurement technique organizing a large set of test items into a number of relatively short item subsets, each of which then is administered to a subsample of test takers, thereby avoiding the need to administer all items to all examinees.

MENTAL RETARDATION

Significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. [34 CFR §300.8(c)(6)].

MINIMUM *n*

The smallest number of students a state has determined can produce statistically reliable results for a group while protecting the confidentiality of the student within the group.

MODIFICATION

A change to the testing conditions, procedures, and/or formatting so that measurement of the intended construct is no longer valid.

MULTIPLE DISABILITIES

Concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the

combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness. [34 CFR §300.8(c)(7)].

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRESS

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), conducted since 1969, is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what American students know and can do in various subject areas. Students with disabilities participate according to NAEP criteria. (For a copy of the criteria, see <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/criteria.asp>).

NORM-REFERENCED TESTS (NRT)

A standardized test designed, validated, and implemented to rank a students' performance by comparing that performance to the performance of that student's peers.

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is that section of the U. S. Department of Education that is responsible for the implementation of the IDEA. It carries out activities related to state eligibility for IDEA funds and monitoring state compliance with IDEA requirements.

ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT

A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures). [34 CFR §300.8(c)(8)].

OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT (OHI)

Having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that – (i) Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia; and (ii) Adversely affects a child's educational performance. [34 CFR 300.8(c)(9)]. Some states include special mention of eligibility criteria for children with ADHD under this category.

OUT-OF-LEVEL TESTING

Administration of a test at a level above or below a student's present grade level to enable the student to be assessed at the level of instruction rather than the level of enrollment.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

An organized collection or documentation of student-generated or student-focused work typically depicting the range of individual student skills.

QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

Under IDEA, qualified personnel means personnel who have met SEA-approved or SEA-recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the area in which the individuals are providing special education or related services.

RELATED SERVICES

Related services means transportation and such developmental, corrective and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes speech-language pathology and audiology services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. The term also includes school health services, social work services in schools and parent counseling and training.

RELIABILITY

The consistency of the test instrument; the extent to which it is possible to generalize a specific behavior observed at a specific time by a specific person to observations of similar behavior at different times or by different behaviors.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals, in institutions and in other settings; related services; travel training; vocational education and instruction in physical education. Special education is a service, not a placement. Students receiving special education and related services must be afforded

the same educational learning opportunities as all children as appropriate.

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY (SLD)

The term means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. [34 CFR §300.8(c)(10)].

SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

A communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. [34 CFR §300.8(c)11].

STANDARDIZED TEST

An established procedure that assures that a test is administered with the same directions and under the same conditions (time limits, etc.) and is scored in the same manner for all students to ensure the comparability of scores. Standardization allows reliable and valid comparison to be made among students taking the test. The two major types of standardized tests are norm-referenced and criterion-referenced.

STANDARDS

There are two types of standards, *content* and *performance*. *Content standards* are statements of the subject-specific knowledge and skills that schools are expected to teach students, indicating what students should know and be able to do. *Performance standards* are indices of qualities that specify how adept or competent a student demonstration must be and that consist of the following four components: 1. levels that provide descriptive labels or narratives for student performance (i.e., advanced, proficient, etc); 2. descriptions of what students at each particular level must demonstrate relative to the task; 3. examples of student work at each level illustrating the range of performance within each level; and 4. cut scores clearly separating each performance level. In New Mexico, Content Standards with Benchmarks and Performance Standards are set forth in NMAC 6.30.2.

STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Assessments constructed to measure how well students have mastered specific content standards or skills.

STATE EDUCATION AGENCY (SEA)

A state education agency (SEA) is the component of state government that is primarily responsible for the state supervision of public elementary and secondary schools. In New Mexico, the SEA is the New Mexico Public Education Department.

STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY

In the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, a student with disabilities is defined as "a child evaluated in accordance with §§300.304-300.311 as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, serious emotional disturbance (hereafter referred to as emotional disturbance), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services."

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 defines a "handicapped person" (outdated terminology) as "any person who (i) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) has a record of such an impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment."

TRANSITION SERVICES

Transition services means a coordinated set of activities, for a student with a disability, that provide positive post school outcomes, is focused on academic and functional achievement, and promotes the students movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. Transition planning must be based on the unique needs of the student and including the student's strengths, preferences, interest, transition assessments, and needs. Transition services include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of post-school adult living objectives and, if appropriate, daily living skills and the provision of a functional vocational assessment (34 CFR 300.43).

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma. [34 CFR §300.8(c)(12)].

VALIDITY

The extent to which a test measures what it was designed to measure. Multiple types of validity exist. Common types of validity include the following:

Construct validity: The extent to which the characteristic to be measured relates to test scores measuring the behavior in situations in which the construct is thought to be an important variable.

Content validity: The extent to which the stimulus materials or situations composing the test call for a range of responses that represent the entire domain of skills, understandings, or behaviors that the test is intended to measure.

Convergent validity: The extent to which the assessment results positively correlate with the results of other measures designed to assess the same or similar constructs.

Criterion-related validity: The extent to which test scores of a group or subgroup are compared to other criterion measures (ratings, classifications, other tests) assigned to the examinees.

Face validity: Concept based on a judgment concerning how relevant the test items appear to be, it relates more to what a test appears to measure than to what the test actually measures.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT INCLUDING BLINDNESS

An impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness. [34 CFR §300.8(c)(13)].

Acknowledgements:

The Primer definitions were compiled by the authors from many sources. Details about the disability categories under IDEA are available in the document [Disability Categories: State Terminology, Definitions & Eligibility Criteria \(2004\)](#).

Some of the assessment terms were quoted with permission from a publication of the Council of Chief State School Officers' [ASES SCASS Project](#).