

Special Education Cheat Sheet

Your quick guide to understanding the language of special education!

Common Acronyms

Acronym	What it Stands For	What it Means
IEP	Individualized Education Plan	A legal plan outlining special education services for a student with disabilities.
504	Section 504 Plan	A plan that gives students with medical or learning challenges support and accommodations to help them succeed in school.
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education	The right to an education tailored to a child's needs, at no cost.
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment	Students should learn with peers in general education as much as possible.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	The federal law that governs special education.
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan	A plan to address challenging behaviors with strategies and supports.
RTI	Response To Intervention	A method for identifying and supporting students before referral to special education.
SPL	Speech-Language Pathologist	A specialist who supports speech, language, and communication needs.
OT	Occupational Therapist	Helps with fine motor skills, sensory processing, and daily tasks.
PT	Physical Therapist	Supports gross motor skills like walking, balance, and posture.
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Supports	A framework schools use to support all students, catch problems early, and give every student the right help at the right time.
AT	Assistive Technology	Tools or devices that help students access learning (text-to-speech, communication devices).

Other Common Terms

12:1:2 Special Class	A special education classroom with up to 12 students, 1 teacher, and 2 teaching assistants, that provides extra support for students who need help with learning, behavior, or social skills.
8:1:3 Special Class	A special education classroom with up to 8 students, 1 teacher, and 3 teaching assistants, that provides support for students with significant needs, especially in communication, behavior, or daily living skills.
Accommodations	Changes to how a student learns or shows what they know, without altering learning goals.
Modifications	Changes to what a student is expected to learn.