



The RITES FACTS

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Special Education Services and Programs: Get Familiar with the Language

It's not just our children who need to do their homework – sometimes parents also have to do their own homework, especially when they have a child who needs special services in school. Part of that “homework” is becoming familiar with the terms associated with special education services and programs. There are many degrees of distinction and it is helpful to know what type of service or program might be proposed to you, *before* you head into a meeting with school personnel. Here are some commonly used terms that will help you better understand your child's education:

Accommodations: Accommodations focus on how students access and demonstrate learning. The changes are meant to provide a student with equal access to learning and equal opportunities to demonstrate what he/she knows. Examples of accommodations are extended time limits, preferential seating, and having test directions read aloud to a student.

504 Plan: This is a document that outlines the specific educational accommodations that an individual student is entitled to. It protects students who have a disability that substantially limits one or more major life activity, including learning, reading, thinking, writing and concentrating. Some students who do not qualify for an IEP meet the requirements for a 504 Plan.

IEP: An Individualized Education Program is a legal document specified in federal special education law. When it is determined that a student has a disability, an IEP is created to outline the special education services that the student will receive. Information on an IEP includes a student's current performance, annual goals, special education and related services, accommodations, participation in state and district-wide tests, needed transition services and measured progress.

Inclusion: An inclusion classroom is made up of both regular education and special education students. A regular education teacher and a special education teacher co-teach the class. The special education students have IEPs and receive most or all of their services within the classroom.

Modifications: Classroom modifications change what students are expected to learn and/or demonstrate. Examples of modifications are having a student read a book at a lower reading level and shortening the length of a written assignment.

RTI/Response to Intervention: Response to intervention is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. An intervention is a classroom support that is put in place to help a student improve academic achievement or behavior without utilizing special education services. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. Levels of RTI include Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3.

Specifically Designed Instruction (SDI): This refers to the specific teaching strategies and methods that will be used to implement the goals and accommodations in a child's IEP. Special education law requires that SDIs are listed in the child's IEP.

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