California Special Education Acronyms & Definitions

Acronym	Term	Updated CDE-Aligned Definition
ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis	A scientific, evidence-based approach that applies principles of learning and behavior to increase socially significant behaviors. ABA may be used as an instructional methodology but is **not** a mandated service under IDEA.
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder	A neurodevelopmental disorder defined in the *DSM-5-TR*. ADHD is not a special education eligibility category under IDEA, but students may qualify for services under **Other Health Impairment (OHI)** or Section 504.
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution	Voluntary processes, including mediation, used to resolve disputes between families and LEAs outside of due process hearings.
APE	Adapted Physical Education	A specially designed physical education program for students whose disabilities prevent safe or successful participation in general physical education.
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder	A neurodevelopmental disability characterized by differences in social communication and restricted or repetitive behaviors, as defined by the *DSM-5-TR*. ASD is a single eligibility category under IDEA and California law.
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan	A written plan, based on an FBA, that outlines strategies and supports to address behaviors that interfere with learning. The BIP is part of the IEP when required.
CAC	Community Advisory Committee	A committee appointed by a SELPA to advise on special education programs, parent education, and community involvement.
EC	California Education Code	The body of state statutes governing education in California, including special education.
ED	Emotional Disability	An IDEA eligibility category describing a condition that adversely affects educational performance over time, including difficulties with interpersonal relationships, behavior, or mood.

Acronym	Term	Updated CDE-Aligned Definition
EL	English Learner	A student whose primary language is not English and who requires instructional support to develop English proficiency. (Replaces the outdated term LEP.)
ESY	Extended School Year	Special education and related services provided beyond the regular school year when necessary to ensure a student receives FAPE.
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act	The current federal education law that replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB).
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education	Special education and related services provided at public expense, meeting state standards, and delivered in conformity with an IEP.
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment	A systematic process to identify the purpose of behaviors that interfere with learning and to inform behavioral supports and interventions.
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	Federal law protecting the privacy of student education records.
IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation	An evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner not employed by the LEA, which may be publicly funded under certain conditions.
IEP	Individualized Education Program	A written plan developed by the IEP team that outlines eligibility, present levels, goals, services, placement, and progress monitoring.
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan	A plan for infants and toddlers (birth–age 3) eligible for early intervention services under IDEA Part C.
IRC	Inland Regional Center	State-funded agencies that provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities, including early intervention for ages 0–3.
LEA	Local Educational Agency	A public authority such as a school district or county office of education responsible for providing special education services.
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment	The requirement that students with disabilities be educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.
NPA	Nonpublic Agency	A private, nonsectarian agency certified by CDE to provide related services when required by an IEP.
NPS	Nonpublic School	A private, nonsectarian school certified by CDE to serve students with disabilities when an LEA cannot provide an appropriate program.
OAH	Office of Administrative Hearings	The state agency that conducts special education due process hearings and mediations in California.

Acronym	Term	Updated CDE-Aligned Definition
OCR	Office for Civil Rights	Federal agency within the U.S. Department of Education that enforces civil rights laws, including Section 504.
OHI	Other Health Impairment	An IDEA eligibility category for students whose health conditions (including ADHD) limit strength, vitality, or alertness and adversely affect educational performance.
OT	Occupational Therapy	A related service that supports students in developing functional skills for participation in school activities.
PT	Physical Therapy	A related service that supports physical access, mobility, and participation in the educational environment.
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System	A communication system that uses pictures to support functional communication for individuals with limited verbal skills.
PWN	Prior Written Notice	Written notice provided to parents when an LEA proposes or refuses to initiate or change identification, evaluation, placement, or services.
RS	Related Services	Related services required to support a student with a disability in benefiting from special education (e.g., OT, PT, SLP, transportation).
RSP	Resource Specialist Program	Specialized instruction provided to students with disabilities who spend the majority of the school day in general education.
SDC	Special Day Class	A separate class setting for students who require more intensive support than can be provided in general education with services.
SELPA	Special Education Local Plan Area	A regional entity responsible for coordinating and providing special education services among member LEAs.
SLD	Specific Learning Disability	An IDEA eligibility category involving a disorder in one or more psychological processes affecting learning (e.g., dyslexia).
SLP	Speech-Language Pathologist	A credentialed professional who provides speech and language services as a related service.
SST	Student Success Team	A general education problem-solving team that designs interventions prior to referral for special education assessment.
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury	An IDEA eligibility category for an acquired brain injury that adversely affects educational performance.
VI	Visual Impairment	An IDEA eligibility category for vision loss that adversely affects educational performance, even with correction.