

Disability Terms and What They Mean

Under the law “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA), the term “child with a disability” means a child:

- *With mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and*
- *Who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services (Knoblauch & Sorenson, 1998).²*

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) – An accident or trauma that causes injury to the brain. Acquired Brain Injury can also be called Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and may be caused by penetrating injuries, such as a car accident, or a Closed Head Injury (CBI) when the brain is damaged but there is no outward sign of trauma.¹¹

Allergy - Exaggerated and sometimes harmful reactions to external substances, called allergens. Allergy may result from exposure to such common allergens as plant pollens from grasses, trees, or ragweed; animal dander, which are tiny scales shed from the skin and hair of cats and other furred animals; insects, such as house dust mites, bees, and wasps; and drugs, such as penicillin. Eggs, milk, peanuts, shellfish, wheat, and chocolate cause the most common food allergies. Researchers estimate that at least 24 million people in the United States suffer from allergies—about 19 percent of the population.

In an allergic reaction, the immune system mistakenly interprets a harmless substance as a harmful one. The immune system responds by producing antibodies called immunoglobulin E (IgE). These IgE antibodies are designed to help neutralize specific parasitic invaders and protect the person from future exposures. Upon first exposure to an allergen, no allergic symptoms develop. But when the person is exposed to the same substance at a later time, the IgE antibodies against the allergen activate an allergic reaction. Allergy symptoms may include itching, sneezing, a stuffy nose, watery eyes, inflammation of the airways in the lungs and wheezing (known as asthma), and even allergic shock and death in rare situation.⁴

Aphasia: Childhood or developmental aphasia is a disorder characterized by difficulty learning language in the absence of mental deficiency, sensory and physical deficits, severe emotional disturbances, environmental factors, or brain damage. Currently, these children are more likely referred to as language impaired, language disordered, or language disabled.¹¹

Apraxia – A loss of the ability to perform voluntary, purposeful movements due to some type of brain damage. Because of this damage, the brain is unable to make the transfer between the ideas of movement to an actual physical response. Apraxia may be present at birth, with no injury or illness to explain its cause. Examples of apraxia include the inability to perform the movements of a command (such as, “clap your hands”), to repeat words correctly, or to demonstrate understanding of the use of an object. Apraxia may result from a head injury, a brain tumor, an infection, or a stroke. Also called dyspraxia.⁴

Articulation – The movement of mouth, lips, tongue, voice box, etc (called the ‘articulators’) to produce speech sounds. Poor or incorrect articulation may be due to problems with the position, timing, direction, pressure, speed, or integration of the movement of lips, tongue, or other articulators. This also refers to the clarity of sounds in speech.¹¹

Asperger’s Syndrome – People with *Asperger’s disorder* may show some symptoms of autism (see Autism) such as difficulties in social interactions, poor eye contact, repetitive body movements, and an insistence on routines and rituals. However, they have normal language development and do not have mental retardation.²

Asthma – A chronic respiratory disorder characterized by coughing, wheezing, and difficult breathing due to bronchospasm (abnormal contraction of the bronchi resulting in temporarily narrowed airways). Asthmatic attacks may be caused by infection, inhaling allergens or irritating airborne substances, or exercise, but sometimes it is difficult to determine what triggers a particular attack.⁴

Ataxia – This describes the condition in which a child’s balance and depth perception are disturbed. This is a type of cerebral palsy.²³

Athetoid – This describe the condition in which the child has involuntary and uncontrolled motion. This is a type of cerebral palsy.²³

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD) - Some specialists estimate that anywhere from 3-10% of school age children are affected by **attention deficit disorder (ADD)** or **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)** (Goldstein, 1992; Rief, 1993). Behavioral characteristics of attention deficit disorder include: being easily distracted, difficulty listening and following directions, difficulty focusing and sustaining attention, difficulty concentrating and staying on task, inconsistent performance in school (some say the one common aspect of ADD/ADHD children is that they are "consistently inconsistent"), being tuned out or "spacey," disorganized or having poor study skills, and difficulty working independently (Reif, 1993). Children with ADHD may have characteristics similar to a child with ADD, but ADHD children may also demonstrate impulsive behaviors, a high activity level, difficulty with transitions, being easily over-stimulated or aggressive, social immaturity, a high frustration level, and low self-esteem (Rief, 1993).²⁰

Audiologists - Audiologists are professionals who specialize in evaluating hearing loss and in conducting hearing assessments.¹³

Audiogram – Hearing test results are recorded on an audiogram. An audiogram is a graph showing hearing sensitivity.¹³

Auditory-Verbal Therapy – The auditory-verbal approach uses technology and teaching strategies that enable deaf and hard of hearing children to learn to listen, understand spoken language, and communicate through speech.¹¹

Augmentative Communication – Augmentative communication refers to a wide variety of non-verbal techniques used to supplement or 'augment' a person's oral speech which allows them to use and develop their language skills. These may include natural gestures, sign language, photographs and other kinds of pictures, spelling out words on alphabet displays, as well as 'higher tech' devices such as voice output devices, etc.¹¹

Autism - developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3 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.

Autism is often referred to as a *spectrum disorder*—that is, a disorder in which symptoms can occur in any combination and with varying degrees of severity. Symptoms of autism usually begin during infancy. Autistic infants may stiffen or go limp when picked up by parents rather than clinging or cuddling up to them. Autistic infants often show little or no interest in other people and lack typical social behaviors. They may not smile at their mother's voice or make eye contact with caregivers. Autistic children fail to develop normal relationships with their parents, brothers or sisters, and other children. Often they seem unaware of the needs and feelings of other people, and may not respond if another person is hurt or in distress.

Children with autism usually play alone. Often they engage in repetitious activities, such as arranging objects in meaningless patterns, flipping a light switch on and off, or staring at rotating objects. Some engage in repetitive body movements; such as spinning, flapping their arms, swaying, rocking, snapping their fingers, and clapping or flapping their hands. In some cases these movements may be harmful, involving repeated biting of their wrists or banging their head. Children with autism frequently become upset at minor changes in their surroundings and daily routines.

Autistic children also have difficulties with language. Some never learn to speak or develop very limited speech. An autistic child may say "you" when he means "I" and produce incorrectly formed sentences. For example, when the child wants a drink he may say, "You want a drink." Autistic children may also demonstrate *echolalia*, mechanically repeating words or phrases that other people say.

About 75 percent of autistic children have mental retardation. Most have moderate mental retardation, with an intelligence quotient (IQ) ranging from 35 to 50. About 10 percent, however, have extraordinary talents such as the ability to memorize long lists of information, make lightning-fast mathematical calculations, or play musical instruments.³

Bipolar Disorder (also known as manic-depression) – A serious but often treatable mental illness. It is a disorder of the brain marked by extreme changes in mood, energy, and behavior. Symptoms may be present since infancy or early childhood, or may suddenly emerge in adolescence or adulthood.²⁴

Central Auditory Processing Disorder– Central Auditory Processing Disorder occurs when the ear and the brain do not coordinate fully. Assuming your child's hearing is good (and this should be verified

by an audiologist), auditory information breaks down somewhere beyond the ear. The causes of CAPD are varied and can include head trauma, lead poisoning, possibly chronic ear infections - and unknown reasons. Because there are many different possibilities - even combinations of causes - each child needs to be assessed on an individual basis.¹²

Cerebral Palsy (CP) – A disorder of movement and posture control resulting from no progressive damage to the brain during fetal life, the newborn period, or early childhood. Both genetic and acquired factors may be involved. Cerebral Palsy may be caused by a lack of normal fetal brain development, or by injury to the brain. There are several ways a baby's brain can be injured, including drug or alcohol exposure, an inadequate supply of oxygen to the brain either prenatally or during delivery, maternal infection that is present during pregnancy, an excess of bilirubin during the neonatal period, infection of the infant's or young child's brain (such as with meningitis or encephalitis), or head injury. The extent and location of brain damage determine the type of cerebral palsy and the associated symptoms (such as abnormal muscle tone, involuntary movements, or lack of balance and coordination). The three main classifications of cerebral palsy are Pyramidal Cerebral Palsy, Extra Pyramidal Cerebral Palsy, and Mixed-Type Cerebral Palsy. Many children with cerebral palsy have normal or high intelligence, but mental retardation, learning disabilities, and seizures may be included in the diagnosis of cerebral palsy.³

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist – A psychiatrist who, in addition to medical and adult psychiatric training (social, emotional and behavioral concerns), has been trained and certified in working with children and adolescents and can prescribe medication.

Cleft Palate – A birth defect that occurs between the third and tenth weeks of fetal life when the palatal tissues don't fuse together. There is an open space in the roof of the mouth, either extending through both the hard and soft palates, or only part way through. Some babies born with a cleft palate also have a cleft lip. Cleft palate is a multifactorial genetic disorder. (Interaction between genetic and environmental factors is the cause.) Cleft palate can be repaired surgically.²

Communication Board – This Augmentative Communication device is a picture or alphabet display available to the child when he needs or has the opportunity to use it. The visual representation may include photographs, Picture Communication Symbols (PCS), Bliss symbols, alphabet letters/words, etc.¹¹

Developmental Delay or Disability- A delay in one or more of the following five developmental areas:

1. *Cognitive development.* Comprehending, remembering, and making sense out of one's experience. Cognitive ability is the ability to think and is often thought of in terms of intelligence;
2. *Communication development.* The ability to effectively use or understand age-appropriate language, including vocabulary, grammar, and speech sounds;
3. *Physical development:* Fine and/or gross motor skills requiring precise, coordinated, use of small muscles and/or motor skills used for body control such as standing, walking, balance, and climbing;
4. *Social or emotional development.* The ability to develop and maintain functional interpersonal relationships and to exhibit age appropriate social and emotional behaviors; and
5. *Adaptive development.* The ability to develop and exhibit age-appropriate self-help skills, including independent feeding, toileting, personal hygiene and dressing skills.

Diabetes Insipidus – A disease characterized by excessive urination and excessive thirst. Diabetes Insipidus is caused by damage to part of the pituitary gland (possibly from a head trauma), which results in inadequate secretion of antidiuretic hormone. Treatment is by eradicating the injury to the pituitary gland when possible, or by replacing the antidiuretic hormone to control the disease. Diabetes Insipidus is more common in the young.²

Diabetes Mellitus – A chronic disorder of carbohydrate metabolism characterized by abnormally high sugar levels in the blood and sugar in the urine, excessive urination and thirst, and sometimes by an abnormally large intake of food, weight loss, and excessive acidity of body fluids. Diabetes Mellitus results from inadequate production or utilization of insulin (a hormone that regulates the metabolism of blood sugar). Some patients with Diabetes Mellitus are insulin-dependent (because the body produces little or no insulin) and therefore require insulin therapy. (This is referred to as Type I.) Others are non-

insulin dependent (the body produces some insulin) and the disease can usually be controlled by diet and medication, although insulin therapy is sometimes needed. (This is referred to as Type II.)²

Disability – A problem or condition which makes it hard for a student to learn or to do things in the same ways as most other students. A disability may be short-term or permanent. See handicap or Impairment.

Discourse – Connected communication of thought sequences, continuous expression or exchange of ideas.¹¹

Down Syndrome – A chromosomal disorder that results in mild to severe learning disabilities and physical symptoms that include a small skull, extra folds of skin under the eyes, and a flattened nose bridge. Muscle tone throughout the body is usually low.

Down syndrome results when a person inherits all or part of an extra copy of chromosome 21. This can occur in a variety of ways, the causes of which are unknown. The most common chromosomal abnormality that produces Down syndrome (accounting for about 95 percent of all cases) is Trisomy 21, a defect in which an extra, third copy of chromosome 21 is present in every cell in the body.

Two other chromosomal abnormalities cause Down syndrome and occur in about 2 to 3 percent of all cases. The first, translocation, takes place when a child inherits a small, extra piece of the 21st chromosome that is attached to another chromosome. If, in addition to the translocation, two normal 21st chromosomes are also present, the person will have some of the features of Down syndrome. If there is only one normal 21st chromosome, the person will not display symptoms but the children may inherit Down syndrome. Mosaic Down syndrome results from a second type of chromosomal abnormality in which only some cells in the body have an extra chromosome. There is no cure for Down syndrome. However, prenatal tests are available to identify fetuses with the disorder.

People with Down syndrome are subject to a variety of medical conditions. Heart abnormalities that may require surgery are present in about half of all Down syndrome cases. Thyroid problems (underproduction or overproduction of thyroid hormones) affect 10 to 20 percent of people with Down syndrome, but these problems usually respond well to treatment. The risk of acute leukemia is somewhat increased, although treatment is successful in the majority of cases.⁵

Dysarthria – Dysarthria is diagnosed when the child has problems with making speech sounds (one of the motor speech disorders) because of muscle paralysis, muscle weakness or poor coordination, which results from a neurological impairment, such as cerebral palsy or acquired brain injury. The result may be distorted, substituted or omitted sounds.¹¹

Disfluency – Dysfluency, also known as stuttering, is an interruption in the smooth, easy flow of speech. Examples include repetitions, prolongations, interjections, and silent pauses. Other movements may become associated with the speech disruptions and are referred to as “secondary characteristics”, such as facial grimacing, eye blinking, foot tapping and muscle tension in the lips, jaw, or neck.¹¹

Dyslexia – A learning disability in which the child has difficulty with reading due to difficulty distinguishing written symbols. She may, for example, transpose letters and words (such as reading “top” as “pot”).²

Dysphagia – A disturbance in the normal act of swallowing. See Feeding and Swallowing Disorders in Infants and Children.¹¹

Early Intervention - Early intervention applies to children of school age or younger who are discovered to have or be at risk of developing a handicapping condition or other special need that may affect their development. Early intervention consists of the provision of services for such children and their families for the purpose of lessening the effects of the condition. Early intervention can be remedial or preventive in nature--remediating existing developmental problems or preventing their occurrence. Early intervention may focus on the child alone or on the child and the family together. Early intervention programs may be center-based, home-based, hospital-based, or a combination. Services range from identification--that is, hospital or school screening and referral services--to diagnostic and direct intervention programs. Early intervention may begin at any time between birth and school age.²¹

Elective Mutism – Elective mutism refers to children who can use speech to communicate but do so only with selected people in certain environments. These children usually speak to extended family or neighborhood children and are primarily mute at school or in social situations.¹¹

Encephalitis – An inflammation of the brain, usually caused by an infection. Encephalitis can be mild, but is more commonly serious, and may result in seizures, paralysis of one side of the body, brain damage, coma or death.²

Epilepsy – A condition characterized by recurrent seizures that are caused by abnormal electrical activity in the brain. Seizures can occur for many reasons, including damage to the brain due to infection, injury, birth trauma, tumor, stroke, drug intoxication, and chemical imbalance. Seizures that have a known cause are called Symptomatic or Secondary. Seizures that do not have an identifiable cause are thought to occur due to a genetic predisposition (but not as an inherited genetic disorder), and are referred to as Idiopathic or Primary seizures. There are several types of seizures, classified according to the area of the brain affected and the associated behaviors. Seizures are classified as either Generalized Seizures or Partial Seizures. Generalized seizures affect the whole brain and usually cause a loss of consciousness. The types of generalized seizures include Tonic/Clonic (Grand Mal) Seizures, Absence (Petit Mal) Seizures, Myoclonic Seizures, and Atonic (Drop) Seizures. Partial seizures affect specific areas of the brain (although the electrical disturbance may not remain confined to one area and may spread to the whole brain, thus causing a generalized seizure). The child may retain consciousness during a partial seizure. The type of partial seizures include Simple Partial Seizures and Complex Partial Seizures. Epilepsy is usually treated with antiepileptic drugs to control the seizures.²

Evaluation – A way of collecting information about a student's special learning needs, strengths, and interests. It is used to help make decisions about whether a student is eligible for special education programs and services. It may include giving individual tests, observing the child, looking at records, and talking with the student and/or his parents. The term evaluation is often used interchangeably with "assessment." However, in the context of services supported by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), evaluation refers to a procedure that is used to determine a child's eligibility for early intervention services.²³

Exema – Atopic dermatitis (AD), often called *eczema* (pronounced "EK-zema") or *atopic eczema*, is a very common skin disease. It affects around 10% of all infants and children. The exact cause is not known, but AD results from a combination of family heredity and a variety of conditions in everyday life that trigger the red, itchy rash. This type of eczema usually begins during the first year of life and almost always within the first five years. It's seldom present at birth, but it often appears after the first six weeks. Other rashes also can start at that time, but most rashes disappear within a few days to weeks whereas AD tends to persist. It may wax and wane, but it keeps coming back.

Atopic dermatitis also is a very itchy rash. Much of the skin damage comes from scratching and rubbing that the child cannot control. The location of the rash can also help us recognize AD. In babies, the rash usually starts on the face or over elbows and knees, places that are easy to scratch and rub. It may spread to involve all areas of the body, although the moist diaper region is often protected. Later in childhood the rash is typically in the elbow and knee folds. Sometimes it only affects the hands, and at least 70% of people with AD have hand eczema at some time in their life. Rashes on the feet, scalp or behind the ears are other clues that might point to AD. AD is not contagious. People with AD cannot "give" it to someone else.

Expressive Language – The ability to express oneself. This usually refers to language expression through speech, but it can include gestures, sign language, use of a communication board, and other forms of expression.¹¹

Feeding and Swallowing Disorders in Infants and Children – Children with feeding and swallowing difficulties (also called dysphagia) are at risk for malnutrition, dehydration, and respiratory problems. Infants and children with feeding and swallowing problems are a diverse group, ranging from premature babies to teenagers. Parents are often the first to notice a feeding problem.

Causes of feeding and swallowing problems –

- Cerebral palsy
- Autism
- Head and neck abnormalities
- Muscle weakness in the face and neck
- Gastroesophageal reflux
- Multiple medical problems
- Respiratory difficulties
- Medications that may cause lethargy or decreased appetite
- Problems with parent-child interactions at mealtime
- Prematurity

Symptoms – Children with feeding and swallowing problems present with a wide variety of symptoms, depending on the nature and cause of their disorder. Typical symptoms include:

- Poor feeding
- Difficulty chewing
- Difficulty drinking from a bottle or cup
- Difficulty breast feeding
- Refusing food or liquid
- Coughing or choking while eating or drinking
- Excessive drooling and food spilling from the mouth
- Liquid leaking out the nose
- Gagging
- Vomiting during meals
- Increased congestion during meals
- Increased fussiness or crying during meals
- Accepting only certain types of food (only pureed foods or only crunchy foods)
- Poor weight gain
- Frequent respiratory infections or pneumonia (may occur when food or liquid is aspirated into the airway, rather than swallowed effectively)

Evaluation and Diagnosis of Feeding and Swallowing Disorders – If you suspect that your child is having difficulty eating, contact your pediatrician as soon as possible. Your physician will examine your child and address any medical reasons for the feeding difficulties, including the presence of reflux or metabolic disorders. The pediatrician may refer you and your child to a feeding team or speech-language pathologist who specializes in treating children with feeding and swallowing disorders.¹⁰

Fetal Alcohol Effects – A combination of congenital abnormalities that are caused by maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy. The effects of alcohol can range from a slightly smaller birth weight to the presence of many of the same anomalies present in a child with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). Usually the term is used to describe a child who has some, but not all, of the characteristics of a child with FAS. Research shows that children with fetal alcohol effects may be just as affected (have as difficult a time functioning and adapting) as children with FAS or prenatal exposure to drugs.²

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome – A combination of congenital abnormalities that are caused by maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy. Characteristics may include growth deficiency, mental retardation, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, motor delays, and congenital abnormalities, such as a characteristic facial appearance, including small eyes, epicanthal folds (a vertical skin fold at the inner corner of the eyes), small jaw, flat midface, indistinct or long philtrum (the grooved area between the upper lip and the nose), thin upper lip, short nose, ear anomalies, and short palpebral fissures (the opening between the upper and lower eyelids).²

Fluency – The smooth, uninterrupted, effortless flow of speech; speech that is not hindered by excessive dysfluencies.¹¹

Fluharty - This criterion-referenced screening tool, the Fluharty Preschool Speech and Language Screening Test (FPSLST), measures early speech and language performance. Its purpose is to identify children in need of an in-depth diagnostic evaluation of speech and language skills. The test screens for syntax, vocabulary, articulation, and receptive and expressive language problems.¹⁷

Grammar – Systems, rules or underlying principles that describe the structure of language, word order in sentences, grammatical markers such as plurals, verb tenses, and pronouns. Language: Language involves listening, speaking, reading and writing. Language problems may affect the ability to use acceptable vocabulary and grammar, to organize ideas for expression, and to communicate in a socially appropriate manner.¹¹

Hearing Impairment – A full or partial loss of the ability to detect sounds. The inability to hear sounds, or distinguish among different sound, will result in problems with speech and language development. A hearing impairment, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness.

Hearing Screen - Hearing tests measure loudness in decibels (intensity) and pitch in Hertz (frequency). The softest sounds (decibels dBs) that can be heard at different frequencies (Hz) is measured and plotted on a graph called an audiogram.

Intensity-vibrations are sound waves that are measured in intensity. If the object vibrates strongly then the sound waves have greater intensity and the sound is loud, if the sound waves are small then the intensity will be soft.

Frequency-frequency is the number of vibrations per second, expressed as Hertz (hz). The sounds of speech are in the range of 250 Hz to 4000 Hz. These frequencies are commonly tested in a hearing test.

Hypotonia – low muscle tone - describes the condition where the muscle tone is very weak and it can impact both gross and fine motor coordination. Low muscle tone can also impact the development of age-appropriate communications and learning in children.²³

IEP - Individual Educational Program – A written plan which describes a student's special individual learning needs and the assistance and services which will be given to that student.²³

IEP Review – A meeting held at least once a year to look at, study, and talk about an exceptional student's IEP. The purpose of the IEP Review is to make decisions regarding the progress of the student toward the IEP goals.

Landau-Kleffner Syndrome - is an epileptic syndrome of childhood. It begins prior to the age of 6, with the best prognosis for those who have a later onset. Most anti-convulsants have some effect in decreasing the seriousness for the epileptic attacks. Children can have seizures during the day or night, which can often wake them, causing a sleep disturbance. The patients also seem to lose their hearing or receptive speech, with this being the early stages of regression. Patients with onset below 3 years often have autistic features.²³

Language: Language involves listening, speaking, reading and writing. Language problems may affect the ability to use acceptable vocabulary and grammar, to organize ideas for expression, and to communicate in a socially appropriate manner.¹¹

Language Impairment/Communication Disorder– These terms are interchangeable to refer to a disorder characterized by a problem in the understanding and/or use of oral or written language (listening, speaking, reading, writing) that adversely affects a child's educational performance.¹¹

Lea Vision Screening Test - In the LEA test series there are **line tests**, tests with **more crowded symbols** and **single symbol tests** to allow assessment of function of the visual system in these three functionally different situations. The number of tests has grown over the years because the needs in screening and assessment of children and adults vary at different ages and different functional levels. When testing adults it is customary to test distance vision first, followed by near vision. It is also customary to first test each eye separately, then binocularly. When testing children better results are obtained by starting with near vision testing before proceeding to greater distances. This allows the child to learn the testing procedures and symbols. Test both eyes, then each eye separately.

Visual acuity tests are used more than any other tests in ophthalmology, optometry and in vision screening in preschool, school and occupational health care. Therefore it is important that the tests used have standardized structure and that they are used correctly.¹⁸

Learning Disability – A learning disorder that involves problems in the understanding and use of the symbols of communication (including listening, speaking, reading, writing, mathematics). There is typically a significant difference between academic achievement and intellectual ability.¹¹

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – The educational setting or program which helps the exceptional student to work and learn to the best of his ability, and which allows him to spend as much time as possible, anywhere from all to none, in a regular program.²³

Lisp – A lisp is a distorted or mispronunciation of the speech sounds. There are two basic types of lisps:

Frontal Lisp: A frontal lisp is produced when the tongue pushes out between the front teeth when saying "s" and "z" and sounds like a "th." For example: "thoap" for "soap" or "houth" for "house." **Lateral List:** A lateral lisp is produced when the tongue lays flat and protrudes between the teeth, causing air to escape into the cheeks rather than straight out of the mouth when producing "s," "z," "sh," "ch," and "j". The result is speech that is distorted, wet and "bubbly" sounding. A lisp can occur with other sound substitutions or alone. When children exhibit a lisp alone, it usually does not affect speech intelligibility.²⁵

Morphology – How sounds and words are put together to form meaning. A 'morpheme' is the smallest unit of language that has meaning. The addition of a morpheme, such as "s", can change the meaning of a word. For example, cat becomes plural cats, but the addition of "s" to bike can also change it from a noun to a verb, bikes. Language is made up of rules about how sounds and words are put together to create meaning and children often have difficulty learning and using the rules.¹¹

Motor Motor skills are motions carried out when the brain, nervous system, and muscles work together.

Fine motor skills are small movements — such as grabbing something with your thumb and forefinger — that use the small muscles of the fingers, toes, wrists, lips, and tongue.

Gross motor skills are the bigger movements — such as running and jumping — that use the large muscles in the arms, legs, torso, and feet. – Use of the large and small muscles to move different parts of the body.

Multidisciplinary Team – A group of people with different kinds of training and experience working together, usually on an ongoing basis to keep the student progressing to the best of his abilities. Professionals often use the word "discipline" to mean a "field of study," such as medicine, social work, or education. Therefore, a multidisciplinary team might include a pediatrician, an occupational therapist, a social worker, and an early childhood educator.²³

Muscular Dystrophy – Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy is the most common form of muscular dystrophy. This X-linked recessive disease is characterized by progressive muscle weakness and wasting, respiratory problems, often mild mental retardation, and rarely, heart failure. Duchenne muscular dystrophy affects mostly boys and appears slowly in early childhood, symptoms usually are noted before age five.

Norms – A pattern or average regarded as typical for a specific group.²³

Occupational Therapist (OT) – A professional who has specialized training in helping an individual developmental or physical skills that aid in daily living activities, with careful attention to enhancing fine motor skills (hand and finger skills, eye-hand coordination and sensory integration). In a developmental assessment, the occupational therapist would assess the child's fine motor skills, coordination, and age-appropriate self-help skills (eating with utensils, dressing, etc.). The OT would also look at how the child responds to and uses what he sees, hears, feels, tastes and smells.

Occupational Therapy (OT) – Treatment, generally fine motor therapy, which helps to develop mental or physical well-being in areas of daily living such as self-care and pre-vocational skills. This treatment is given by a trained Occupational Therapist.²³

Pediatric Nurse Practitioner – A registered nurse with specialized, postgraduate training in providing ongoing care for the child/patient in both health (well-child visits) and illness. Their training often includes significant attention to child behavior and development.²³

Pediatric Psychologist – A psychologist who has specialized training in working with children and adolescents. In a developmental assessment of an infant or toddler, the child and adolescent psychologist would assess a child's social, emotional and intellectual development. A psychologist would likely administer standardized tests that consist of presenting a variety of tasks, ranging from very easy to very challenging, in order to determine the full range of the child's skills. The psychologist may also observe the child during free play alone or with caregivers as part of the assessment.²³

Pediatrician – A medical doctor who has specialized training in caring for the physical health and development of children.²³

Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) – A diagnosis sometimes given to a child who has some, but not all, of the symptoms of autism.⁶ PDD is a generic term referring to a group of disorders that are characterized by: impairments in social interaction, impairment in verbal and nonverbal communication, and a restrictive, stereotypic pattern of behaviors. There is considerable variability in symptoms. There are a variety of disorders that fall under this category (including Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Rett's Syndrome).⁶

Phonological Disorder – Child who has difficulty with the development of speech sounds and the rules for the sound system.¹¹

Phonology – The sound system of language including speech sounds, speech patterns and rules that apply to those sounds.¹¹

Physical Therapist (PT) – A professional trained in assessing and providing therapy to treat developmental delays, disease and injury to motor areas using methods such as exercise, heat, light and massage. In a developmental assessment, the physical therapist would assess the ability and quality of the child's use of her legs, arms, and complete body by encouraging the display of specific motor tasks as well as observing the child in play.²³

Physical Therapy (PT) – Treatment helps to maintain or improve the use of bones, joints, muscles, and nerves. This treatment is given by a trained Physical Therapist.²³

Physically Impaired –The student with a physical impairment is one who has a severe illness, condition, or disability which makes it hard for him to learn in the same ways as other students his age.²³

Pragmatics – The rules that govern and describe how language is used in different contexts and environments. For example, the words and tone of voice will be more formal when talking with the principal and may be very casual and include slang when talking with other children. Social rules are very subtle. Some children have difficulty figuring these rules out and applying them appropriately. As a result, they may be identified as having inappropriate or poor behavior.¹¹

Receptive Language – The ability to understand or comprehend language. It usually refers to the ability to understand verbal expression, but it can include the ability to understand sign language, writing, braille and other forms of language.¹¹

Resonance – Vibration of one or more structures related to the source of a sound. In voice, resonance relates to the quality of the voice produced (eg. hyponasal, hypernasal).¹¹

Rett Syndrome - Rett Syndrome is a disorder where a child appears normal, then gets progressively worse. However, the period of normal development is much shorter than in Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. Usually, the child will lose previously acquired skills and begin demonstrating autistic-like behaviors around their first birthday.

Unlike the other PDDs, this syndrome most often affects girls. Also, while the other PDDs reach a certain level of impairment and then plateau, Rett sufferers continue to deteriorate, often resulting in shortened life spans. Fortunately, this is the most rare form of PDD.⁶

Screening - The terms "screening" and "assessment" are not interchangeable. Screening is a preliminary process for identifying, from all the children, those who may be at risk of future difficulty in school (e.g., inability to meet academic expectations) and those who may have special needs in learning (e.g., extraordinary abilities and talents or handicapping conditions). In both cases, the identified children must be assessed more carefully to evaluate whether they do indeed require adaptations of the regular instructional program, or qualify for specialized educational placement. Because screening is intended for all children, the measures should be inexpensive, brief, simple to administer, and easy to interpret. Screening tools require lower predictive power than diagnostic measures. Thus, screening alone is not sufficient for decisions about a child's placement or kind of instruction. Further assessment is necessary for those decisions (Meisels and others, 1984).¹⁹

Semantic-Pragmatic Disorder – Semantic-pragmatic disorder (ie. language meaning and language use difficulties) is sometimes used to describe those children who demonstrate language difficulties similar to autism/PDD without the non-verbal social and behavioral characteristic typical of autism/PDD.¹¹

Semantics – The study of the meaning of language, including meaning of the word, sentence, and conversational level.¹¹

Sensory – Having to do with the use of the senses of hearing, seeing, touching (feeling), smelling, or tasting as a part of learning. An example of a sensory skill is being able to see the differences between letters of the alphabet.²³

Sensory Integration - Sensory integration, simply put, is the ability to take in information through senses (touch, movement, smell, taste, vision, and hearing), put it together with prior information, memories, and knowledge stored in the brain; and to make a meaningful response. Sensory integration occurs in the central nervous system and is generally thought to take place in the mid-brain and brainstem levels in complex interactions of the portions of the brain responsible for such things as coordination, attention, arousal levels, autonomic functioning, emotions, memory, and higher level cognitive functions. Because of the complexity of the various areas which are dependent upon and interact with each other as well as the child's own personality and environment, it is not possible to have a single list of symptoms which identify sensory integrative dysfunction.⁸

Sensory Integration Disorder – Sensory integration disorder or dysfunction (SID) is a neurological disorder that results from the brain's inability to integrate certain information received from the body's five basic sensory systems. These sensory systems are responsible for detecting sights, sounds, smell, tastes, temperatures, pain, and the position and movements of the body. The brain then forms a combined picture of this information in order for the body to make sense of its surroundings and react to them appropriately. The ongoing relationship between behavior and brain functioning is called sensory integration (SI), a theory that was first pioneered by A. Jean Ayres, Ph.D., OTR in the 1960s.⁸

Sign Language –There are a number of gestural sign languages used primarily by the deaf community, with American Sign Language (ASL) being the primary one in use. It has its own structure, independent of English.

Sleep Disorders

sleep apnea is one of the most common serious sleep disturbances seen in children and is a breathing disorder that occurs during sleep. Some symptoms of sleep apnea are snoring, breathing pauses, mouth breathing, restlessness, and daytime sleepiness.

Restless legs syndrome is a neurological disorder that is characterized by a creepy-crawly feeling in the legs at bedtime. People with RLS feel a need to move their legs to make this uncomfortable feeling go away. In children, they have difficulty falling asleep and are often running about the house after being put to bed.

Nightmares are common in all children, especially between the ages of 3 and 6. Nightmares are part of normal development and young children often have nightmares of monsters and scary things. Children also have nightmares about specific events that may have worried them or scared them, such as getting lost in a grocery store or being afraid of a dog.⁹

Special Needs – Referring to the needs of the child who requires special services to assist with the acquisition of skills in one or more developmental areas: cognition, communication (language), gross motor, fine motor (perceptual, social, and self-help(adaptive)). The needs are generated by the child's disability.²

Speech – Speech refers to the transmission of language orally. Speech impairment includes articulation and/or phonological disorder, dysfluency, apraxia, dysarthria, voice and resonance.¹¹

Speech and Language Impaired – The student with a speech or language impairment is one who has problems in talking so that he can be understood, sharing ideas, expressing needs, or understanding what others are saying. Children with this type of impairment receive speech therapy (ST).¹¹

Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP) – A professional who is trained in assessing and treating problems in communication including: articulation (pronunciation of sounds), receptive language (understanding and processing what is communicated by others), expressive language (the ability to communicate to others), fluency (including stuttering), and voice problems (including pitch and intonation). A speech and language pathologist also is trained to work with oral/motor problems, such as swallowing, and other feeding difficulties.²³

Spina Bifida - Spina Bifida means cleft spine, which is an incomplete closure in the spinal column. In general, the three types of spina bifida (from mild to severe) are:
1. *Spina Bifida Occulta*: There is an opening in one or more of the vertebrae (bones) of the spinal column without apparent damage to the spinal cord.
2. *Meningocele*: The meninges, or protective covering around the spinal cord, has pushed out through the opening in the vertebrae in a sac called the "meningocele." However, the spinal cord remains intact. This form can be repaired with little or no damage to the nerve pathways.
3. *Myelomeningocele*: This is the most severe form of spina bifida, in which a portion of the spinal cord itself protrudes through the back. In some cases, sacs are covered with skin; in others, tissue and nerves are exposed. Generally, people use the terms "spina bifida" and "myelomeningocele" interchangeably.¹⁵

Stuttering – see Dysfluency

Syntax – The order of language, especially the way words are put together in phrases or sentences to produce meaning.¹¹

Tourette Syndrome (TS)- is an inherited, neurological disorder characterized by repeated and involuntary body movements (tics) and uncontrollable vocal sounds. In a minority of cases, the vocalizations can include socially inappropriate words and phrases -- called coprolalia. These outbursts are neither intentional nor purposeful. Involuntary symptoms can include eye blinking, repeated throat clearing or sniffing, arm thrusting, kicking movements, shoulder shrugging or jumping.

These and other symptoms typically appear before the age of 18 and the condition occurs in all ethnic groups with males affected 3 to 4 times more often than females. Although the symptoms of Tourette Syndrome vary from person to person and range from very mild to severe, the majority of cases fall into the mild category. Associated conditions can include attention problems, impulsiveness and learning disabilities.

Most people with TS lead productive lives and participate in all professions. Increased public understanding and tolerance of TS symptoms are of paramount importance to people with Tourette Syndrome.

Vision Impairment - Vision impairment means that a person's eyesight cannot be corrected to a "normal" level. It is a loss of vision that makes it hard or impossible to do daily tasks without specialized adaptations. Vision impairment may be caused by a loss of visual acuity, where the eye does not see objects as clearly as usual. It may also be caused by a loss of visual field, where the eye cannot see as wide an area as usual without moving the eyes or turning the head.¹⁴

Voice Disorder – Voice disorders include abnormalities in the pitch (too high/too low), quality (hoarse/breathy, tight/harsh), loudness (inadequate/too loud), or resonance (hyponasal, such as when you have a cold, or hypernasal, when there is too much sound coming through the nose) of the voice.¹¹

Unintelligible Speech – Speech that cannot be understood by the listener to some degree.¹¹
