

Special Education Common Terms



Term	Definition
Ableism	<p>The Center for Disability Rights defines ableism as “a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ in one form or the other. Ableism is intertwined in our culture, due to many limiting beliefs about what disability does or does not mean, how able-bodied people learn to treat people with disabilities and how we are often not included at the table for key decisions.”</p> <p>http://cdrnys.org/blog/uncategorized/ableism/</p>
Accommodations & Modifications	<p>According to understood.org, accommodations change <i>how</i> students learn material and modifications change <i>what is taught</i>. Examples of accommodations include additional time for assignments, alternate means of demonstrating mastery of the standards, and use of a calculator when calculation skills are not being addressed. An example of a modification is using a calculator when calculation skills <u>are</u> being addressed. If a student is pursuing a diploma in LA Unified, they may receive accommodations but not modifications.</p> <p>https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/the-difference-between-accommodations-and-modifications</p>
Co-teaching	<p>Co-teaching occurs when two teachers, a special educator and a general educator, share the planning, instruction, assessment, and other classroom functions for the benefit of the whole class. Co-teaching is commonly used to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom.</p>
Learning Center	<p>LAUSD policy (Reference Guide 2025) states that “the secondary Learning Center is a data-driven, evidence-based approach for providing the level of strategic or intensive Direct Instruction Services some students with disabilities will need in order to access the general education curriculum. Secondary schools should schedule elective courses in the Learning Center to support this type of instruction and this service delivery option.”</p>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<p>LRE is an acronym for “Least Restrictive Environment.”</p> <p>Every student has individualized learning needs that must be taken into consideration, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act states:</p> <p>“To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities...are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.” Additionally, Special Day classes are only appropriate when the “nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.” (IDEA, 300.114 LRE requirements)</p>

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<p>Mainstreaming</p>	<p>In the past, the Division of Special Education referred to “mainstreaming” or “integration” to describe students with disabilities spending more time with their general education peers. There has been a recent shift in the use of this term and the connected philosophy. “Inclusion” differs from “Mainstreaming” or “Integration” in significant ways. “Mainstreaming” is when students with disabilities “earn” the opportunity to be educated in the general education classroom for one or more classes by demonstrating “readiness.” Inclusion involves supporting students with disabilities through individualized supports so they are able to access the general education curriculum.</p> <p>The image below, posted by Think Inclusive at www.thinkinclusive.us, displays how models of segregation, exclusion, and integration differ from inclusion. In a segregated model, students with disabilities are taught in smaller classes, completely separated from the general education setting. In an integration model, students with disabilities placed in a general education setting but still taught separately from peers differ significantly from inclusion.</p> <div data-bbox="467 898 1464 1654" data-label="Diagram"> </div>
<p>Neurodiversity</p>	<p>Neurodiversity is the recognition that brains are as diverse as the people they belong to, and that the wide variety of learners makes us stronger as a society.</p>
<p>Presumed Competence</p>	<p>Presumed competence is the assumption that students are able to think, learn and understand even if there is no tangible evidence that this is accurate. Presumed competence is commonly called “the least dangerous assumption” because students have much to gain when we keep expectations high.</p>

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Resource Services (RSP)	California Education Code defines the resource services as instruction and services for students with IEPs who are in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day. Resource services providers are also charged with providing information and assistance to the students, their parents, and other staff members. Additionally, they coordinate and monitor services for students (Ed Code 56362) and provide specially designed instruction in a variety of ways, including co-planning, co-teaching, and direct instruction in the learning center or in the general education classroom.
Special Day Class (SDC)	<p>A Special Day Class is a classroom in which only students with disabilities are enrolled and the teacher has a special education credential. There are no general education students in the class. Special Day Classes are appropriate when the “nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.” (IDEA, 300.114 LRE requirements)</p> <p>When students are in a Special Day Class for 50% of the instructional day or more, they are in the Special Day Program.</p> <p>Note that it is possible for an IEP team to determine that a student needs a Special Day Class for one subject area but receive Resource Services or no services for the remainder of the day.</p>
Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)	<p>IDEA regulations define “specially designed instruction” as “adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction (i) to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and (ii) ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.” (34 CFR Sec. 300.39(b)(3))</p> <p>Go to the United Federation of Teachers website at http://www.uft.org/teaching/specially-designed-instruction to learn more about the features of SDI.</p>
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) defines Universal Design for Learning or UDL as a research-based set of principles to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and effective for all. UDL is a framework for providing students with multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression to increase their access to learning. UDL is a way of differentiating instruction.