

The Lexicon of Education: Deciphering the *Alphabet Soup*

One of the most immediate hurdles for parents is the “alphabet soup” of educational acronyms used in school meetings, reports, and communications. These terms are often used without explanation, creating a barrier that can make it difficult for parents to understand what’s happening in their child’s education and advocate effectively.

Federal Accountability and Law

Acronyms in this category relate to funding, civil rights, and mandatory performance targets.

Acronym	Full Name	Board Context
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act	The current federal education law requires states to have accountability plans for performance.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	Federal law ensures services to children with disabilities and protects student rights.
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	Federal law protecting the privacy of student records.
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	Civil rights law prohibiting discrimination; also stands for "Average Daily Attendance".
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment	Requirement that students with disabilities be educated with non-disabled peers whenever possible.

Instructional Models and Social-Emotional Supports

These acronyms describe how students are supported in the classroom and the frameworks used to organize student well-being.

Acronym	Full Name	Board Context
MTSS	Multi-Tiered Student Support	A framework for providing academic and behavioral strategies for all students
RTI	Response to Intervention	A multi-tier approach to identify and support students with specific learning needs
SEL	Social-Emotional Learning	The process of developing self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support	A tiered framework for supporting student behavioral and mental health needs
HQIM	High-Quality Instructional Material	Research-backed curriculum materials aligned to high standards.
PLC	Professional Learning Communities	Groups of teachers who meet regularly to collaborate on improving instruction
ELL / EL	English Language Learner	Students who are in the process of acquiring English proficiency
IEP	Individualized Education Plan	A legally binding document for a student with a disability outlining specific goals