

# **West Seneca Central Schools Guide to Special Education for Teacher Aides**



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## Educational Terms

There are several different educational terms to be familiar with in the Special Education realm. Below are some of the most common terms you will encounter:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b><i>504 Plan</i></b>	A plan developed for students who have a disability, but do not require special education services.
<b><i>Accommodations</i></b>	Supports that are put in place to help a student learn the same material as their peers. Accommodations change <i>how</i> a student learns.
<b><i>Annual Review</i></b>	A meeting conducted annually to discuss the progress a child is making in their special education programming and towards the goals listed on their Individualized Education Program (IEP).
<b><i>Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)</i></b>	A written improvement plan created for a student based on the outcome of the Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA).
<b><i>Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)</i></b>	A program that provides services to children from 3-5 years of age who have or are at risk of having a developmental disability.
<b><i>Committee on Special Education (CSE)</i></b>	A multidisciplinary team established for students aged 5 to 21. The committee determines eligibility, develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and places the student in the least restrictive environment.
<b><i>Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)</i></b>	A behavior-focused evaluation. The goal of the evaluation is to understand why a student is engaging in problematic behavior and to develop strategies for addressing that behavior in a positive and proactive way.
<b><i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</i></b>	A piece of American legislation that ensures students with a disability are provided with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs.
<b><i>Individualized Education Program (IEP)</i></b>	A legal document under United States law that is developed for each public school child who needs special education services.
<b><i>Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)</i></b>	A child with a disability must be educated within the same classroom as typical mainstream non-disabled peers to the fullest extent possible.
<b><i>Modifications</i></b>	Supports that are put into place that change <i>what</i> a student is taught or expected to learn.

## Classifications

In order for a student to receive special education services, they must be classified under one (1) of thirteen categories (13). The categories are as follows:

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Definition according to the IDEA</b>
<b><i>Autism</i></b>	A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
<b><i>Deafness</i></b>	A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
<b><i>Deaf-Blindness</i></b>	A combination of hearing and visual impairments which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.
<b><i>Emotional Disability</i></b>	A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a period of time and to a marked degree: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems, and/or schizophrenia.
<b><i>Hearing Impairment</i></b>	An impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
<b><i>Intellectual Disability</i></b>	Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
<b><i>Multiple Disabilities</i></b>	A combination of impairments which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments.
<b><i>Orthopedic Impairment</i></b>	A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance (i.e. cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, amputations, etc.).
<b><i>Other Health Impairment</i></b>	Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment (i.e. ADHD, ADD, Diabetes, Epilepsy, etc.).
<b><i>Specific Learning Disability</i></b>	A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may impact the ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations (i.e. dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc.).

<b><i>Speech or Language Impairment</i></b>	A communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
<b><i>Traumatic Brain Injury</i></b>	An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
<b><i>Visual Impairment</i></b>	An impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. This includes both partial sight and blindness.

## Modifications

Modifications change *what* a student is taught or expected to learn.

<b><i>Modified Assignments</i></b>	The student needs classroom assignments modified. This will be done by the Special Education Teacher or classroom teacher. This could look like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completing different problems</li> <li>• Having an alternate project or assignment</li> </ul>
<b><i>Modified Homework</i></b>	The student needs homework modified. This will be done by the Special Education Teacher or classroom teacher. This could look like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completing different homework problems</li> <li>• Completing a modified amount of homework problems</li> </ul>

## Classroom Accommodations

Accommodations help students learn the same material as their peers. Accommodations change *how* a student learns. Some common classroom accommodations are below:

<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>What it might look like in a classroom</b>
<b><i>Access to Sensory Tools</i></b>	The student needs a sensory tool or tool(s) to help with self-regulation.
<b><i>Additional Time</i></b>	The student needs additional time to complete assignments.
<b><i>Allow Breaks</i></b>	The student needs breaks.
<b><i>Behavior Plan</i></b>	The student has a behavior plan that needs to be implemented.
<b><i>Checking for Understanding</i></b>	The student needs a check-in to make sure they understand what is expected of them prior to, and while working through, a task.
<b><i>Copy of Class Notes</i></b>	The student needs a copy of class notes. This could be a physical or digital copy of class notes.
<b><i>Directions</i></b>	The student needs directions repeated.

<b><i>Repeated</i></b>	
<b><i>Graphic Organizer</i></b>	The student needs a blank shell, or specific organizer, to help during the writing process.
<b><i>Help with Organization</i></b>	The student needs help with organization. It may be an organization check-in, color coding system, folders for each subject, etc.
<b><i>Positive Praise or Reinforcement</i></b>	The student needs positive praise.
<b><i>Refocusing / Redirection Prompts</i></b>	The student needs to be provided with verbal and/or non-verbal prompts to attend to a task and stay focused. This could be a verbal reminder, a tap on the desk, pointing at the student's paper, etc.
<b><i>Reteaching</i></b>	The student needs skills retaught.
<b><i>Visual Aids</i></b>	The student needs visual aids that support classroom instruction.

## Testing Accommodations

Testing accommodations refer to supports that are put into place to help a student access the general education curriculum while taking tests. These are put into place for all tests, including state assessments. Some examples of common testing accommodations are below:

<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>What it might look like in a classroom</b>
<b><i>Allow Breaks</i></b>	The student is allowed to take breaks while testing. The student's IEP should indicate exactly when breaks should be taken and the duration of the break.
<b><i>Chunking</i></b>	The test should be broken up for the student either page-by-page or in smaller chunks. This is often done to avoid rushing or to help students who may get overwhelmed by the length of a test.
<b><i>Directions Clarified</i></b>	The student may need to be provided with clarification of what they are being asked to do. This could include rephrasing the directions or simplifying the language in the directions.
<b><i>Directions Read</i></b>	The student has only the directions on a test read aloud to them.
<b><i>Extended Time</i></b>	The student has the ability to receive extended time while taking a test. Typically, it is 1.5x the amount of time allotted.
<b><i>Flexible Setting</i></b>	The student has the ability to take their tests in a flexible setting. This could be at a back table in the classroom, in the hallway, with a special education teacher in a separate room, etc. Specifics regarding the location(s) that a student is allowed to take a test should be indicated on the IEP.
<b><i>Math Tables</i></b>	For students who do not yet have calculators, math tables (100s chart,

	multiplication chart, division chart) should be provided during a test. The student's IEP should indicate exactly which kinds of tables are needed.
<b><i>Refocusing Prompts / Focusing Prompts</i></b>	The student should be provided with prompts to refocus while testing. This could be a verbal reminder, a tap on the shoulder, pointing at the test in front of them, etc. If there is a prompt that works best for the student, it should be indicated on the student's IEP.
<b><i>Test Read</i></b>	The student has the test read to them in its entirety. There are different variations of what "Test Read" can look like. The student's IEP should indicate exactly how the test should be read.

## Services Provided within Special Education

**Occupational Therapy-** Occupational Therapists address the needs of students experiencing delays, disabilities, or health challenges through therapeutic intervention to promote skill advancement, the use of compensatory strategies, adaptations to the child's equipment and environment, and/or modifying the curriculum or activity.

**Physical Therapy-** A student may receive Physical Therapy if they demonstrate delays with physical demands. They work on building independence, gross motor skills, poor posture, and building stamina and strength.

**Speech Therapy-** Training to help people with speech and language problems to speak more clearly.

**Counseling-** During small group counseling, students are given the opportunity to learn more about themselves, develop new tools like coping strategies and self-awareness, improve confidence, and hear from peers that they are not alone.







**Music Therapy-** Music therapy is the use of music and/or elements of music (like sound, rhythm and harmony) to accomplish goals, like reducing stress or improving quality of life.

**Vision Therapy-** Vision therapy is a program that aims to improve a person's visual abilities. It uses a variety of ways – such as eye exercises, testing, occlusion (patching) lenses and prisms – to treat a range of visual problems.





**Hearing Therapy-** Auditory-verbal therapy (AVT) — sometimes called auditory-based therapy — is a type of early intervention therapy for young children who are deaf and hard of hearing, or those who use hearing technology such as hearing aids or cochlear implants.

## Elementary Level Technology Programs




Here are some common technology programs to be familiar with at the elementary level:

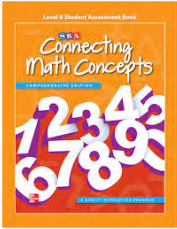

	Description
<b>Clever</b> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online platform that makes it possible for every student to instantly access a world of digital learning.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students use this program to access their digital tools and programs. They will often sign into apps on this platform using their West Seneca Schools Google login information.</p>
<b>Google Classroom</b> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> A set of online tools that allows teachers to create lessons, collect student work, grade, and return graded papers.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Teachers may put classwork assignments or homework assignments here.</p>
<b>Google Docs</b> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online word processor.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students may use this program to type classwork assignments or homework assignments.</p>
<b>Google Slides</b>  Google Slides	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online powerpoint.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students may use this program to type classwork assignments or homework assignments for presentations in class.</p>
<b>Nearpod</b> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> A tool for creating and delivering interactive presentations, assessments, and more.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Teachers may assign lessons on Nearpod for students to complete as classwork or for homework.</p>
<b>Kami</b> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online document annotation and markup tool.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Teachers and students may use this program to mark up documents.</p>
<b>Blooket</b>	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online review website.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b></p>




	Teachers may use this program to review content that has been taught in the classroom.
<b>Canva</b> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online template editor app for creating social media graphics and presentations.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students may use this program to create graphics, posters, etc. for classwork assignments or homework assignments.</p>
<b>Book Creator</b> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> A digital tool that enables students to create and read multimodal digital books.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students may use this program to create books for classwork assignments or projects.</p>
<b>Read&amp;Write</b> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> Read and Write is a text-to-speech program that provides visual and auditory feedback of text.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students may use this program to study, revise, proofread and increase their understanding or assignments or passages.</p>

## Elementary Curriculum Overview (as of April 2024)





		
Students at the elementary level use Benchmark Advance as their reading curriculum.	Students at the elementary level, who receive Consultant Teacher Services, use Steps to Advance as an intervention for reading.	Students at the elementary level use Envisions as their math curriculum.
<p><b>Key Takeaways:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There are 10 units (topics) to explore throughout the school year. The 10 units are consistent across all grade levels so students can build on their knowledge from the previous school year.</li> <li>❖ Each unit is broken down</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Takeaways:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Builds vocabulary, language, reading comprehension, and content knowledge.</li> <li>❖ Provides scaffolds to complex text to help students to become confident, on grade-level readers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Takeaways:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ There are 16 units (topics) to explore throughout the school year. The 16 units vary by grade level and are based on NYS standards.</li> <li>❖ Elementary teachers typically spend 1-2 days on each lesson within a</li> </ul>

<p>into weeks and days. Teachers use this timeline to plan their instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Students will receive their own consumable, a paper magazine-like resource, to use throughout the topic.</li> <li>❖ There is an online component that students will utilize throughout the school year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Addresses key informational and literary reading goals.</li> <li>❖ Aligns to Benchmark Advance Knowledge Strands for seamless support of core instruction.</li> </ul>	<p>unit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Students will receive their own book to use throughout the topic.</li> <li>❖ There is an online component that students will utilize throughout the school year.</li> </ul>
		
<p>Students at the elementary level in self contained programs use Connecting Math Concepts as their math curriculum.</p>	<p>Students at the elementary level in self contained programs use TouchMath as their math curriculum.</p>	
<p><b>Key Takeaways:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Six-level program (Levels A-F) provides highly explicit and systematic instruction in the wide range of content specified in the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.</li> <li>❖ Stresses understanding and introduces concepts carefully, then weaves them together throughout the program.</li> <li>❖ The lessons are designed to introduce concepts at a reasonable rate and help students make connections between important concepts.</li> <li>❖ The lessons provide the practice needed to achieve mastery and understanding.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Takeaways:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ A unique multi-sensory approach allows students to see, say, touch, and hear math concepts.</li> <li>❖ It engages students in a hands-on approach to counting, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.</li> </ul>	

❖ Specific strategies are taught for all content.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ West Seneca Central School District uses iReady as a diagnostic tool to measure student progress throughout the school year.</li> <li>❖ Students take an online iReady test in ELA and Math three times during the school year. Students who have testing accommodations do not receive any accommodations while taking these tests.</li> <li>❖ The program creates personalized lessons for students based on their strengths and developments in ELA and Math. Students complete daily/weekly lessons depending on their teacher's plan for implementing the program.</li> </ul>	

## Secondary Level Technology Programs

Here are some common technology programs to be familiar with at the secondary level:

	Description
<b>Google Classroom</b> 	<p><b>What is it?</b> A set of online tools that allows teachers to create lessons, collect student work, grade, and return graded papers.</p> <p><b>When may it be used?</b> Teachers may put classwork assignments or homework assignments here.</p>
<b>Google Docs</b> 	<p><b>What is it?</b> An online word processor.</p> <p><b>When may it be used?</b> Students may use this program to type classwork assignments or homework assignments.</p>
<b>Google Slides</b> 	<p><b>What is it?</b> An online powerpoint.</p> <p><b>When may it be used?</b> Students may use this program to type classwork assignments or homework assignments for presentations in class.</p>
<b>News 2 You</b> 	<p><b>What is it?</b> A website to utilize current events/articles/worksheets, etc. and more.</p> <p><b>When may it be used?</b> Students may use this program for classwork in our 12-1-1 and 6-1-1 classes.</p>
<b>Delta Math</b>	<p><b>What is it?</b> <b>When may it be used?</b> Teachers and students may use this program to complete assignments and/or classwork</p>

	
<p><b>Castle Learning</b></p> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online site to complete assignments, classwork or quizzes.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> STeachers and students may use this program to complete assignments and/or classwork</p>
<p><b>Book Creator</b></p> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> A digital tool that enables students to create and read multimodal digital books.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students may use this program to create books for classwork assignments or projects.</p>
<p><b>Kahoot</b></p> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online teaching tool that utilizes trivia, content areas and current events presented in a quiz type of format and the kids compete against each other.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students may use this program to reinforce learning, discover new learning, during instruction time or classwork/homework.</p>
<p><b>Quizziz</b></p> 	<p><b><i>What is it?</i></b> An online resource to help create content questions from short videos.</p> <p><b><i>When may it be used?</i></b> Students may use this program to reinforce learning, discover new learning, during instruction time or classwork/homework.</p>

## **General Role and Responsibilities**

### **What are Teacher Aide roles and responsibilities?**

A Teacher Aide has different responsibilities in the classroom. Their main responsibility is to help students with their learning. Teacher aides will do this in a number of different ways. They will work closely with the student to find out their strengths and weaknesses. They will also monitor their behavior.

Teacher aides will implement different strategies to help make the learning process smoother and more efficient. This includes scaffolding, giving clear instructions about the work, and using prompt questions to help children understand better.

A Teacher Aide may work with one specific student, or they may circulate between students or small groups. It is **not** a teacher aide's responsibility to teach the whole class, however they can help with behavior management.

#### **Some other Teacher Aide responsibilities include:**

- Supervising and participating in activities to improve the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of children.
- Assist children with the development of social skills.
- Supporting the classroom teacher by implementing accommodations and modifications (listed above).

Overall, a Teacher Aide's roles and responsibilities are to help a student(s) with their learning, help with behavior management, and assist in light duties to help the classroom run smoothly.

As a Teacher Aide in West Seneca, you will primarily be working with students who have needs surrounding academics, social skills, and behavioral needs. As such you the following is important:

- Need to have knowledge of the IEP (information provided by Special Ed. Teacher)
  - Understand the terminology on the IEP and what it means within each environment (Varies with teacher and ratio)
  - Understanding the implementation strategies specific to each accommodation or modification
    - Need to be familiar with the content and goals of the IEP for each student they support
    - Need to be able to implement strategies outlined in the IEP to address academic, social, physical, and management needs

- Communication
  - Teacher Aides will need to regularly communicate with the Special Ed. Teacher to discuss and understand the specific goals, modifications, testing modifications, and accommodations outlined in the IEP
- Provide support to classroom teachers and special education teachers, related service providers
  - Collaboration
    - Need to be able to collaborate with general ed and special ed teachers to create a cohesive and inclusive learning environment
  - Resources
    - Need to be able to utilize resources and materials as directed by the teachers
    - Assist in adapting and modifying materials to meet the diverse needs of the students
- Self Contained Assignments - Based on needs of students in the program - academic, social, physical, and management needs
  - Individualization
    - Understand the specific academic, social, physical, and management needs of each student in the special education program
    - Tailor support strategies based on the individual requirements outlined in the IEP
    - Integrate students into the general education environment as much as possible and appropriate. Encourage friendships and appropriate relationships
  - Classroom Management
    - Assist the teacher in maintaining a positive and structured classroom environment
    - Understand and adhere to the specific classroom management strategies the teacher has outlined for the classroom
    - Implement behavior management strategies outlined in the IEP
    - Provide breaks and strategies outside of the classroom such as calming rooms, or walks, as needed per child
    - Get breakfast/lunch from cafeteria
- 1:1 Aide - Typically provides support for student academic, social, physical, and management needs
  - Focused Support
    - Provide individualized support to a specific student
    - Address academic, social, physical, and management needs on a one-on-one basis
    - Depending on the student's needs - feeding, lifting, changing of clothes/diapers and toileting may be required. Please use professionalism

and the student's dignity is the utmost priority. Encourage the student to be as independent as possible. Provide assistance as needed to facilitate independence.

- Observation and Feedback
  - Regularly observe the student's performance and provide feedback to the teacher
  - Collaborate with the teacher to adjust strategies based on student progress
- 5:1 Aide - Provides support for several students within an inclusive classroom for academic, social, physical, and management needs
  - Group Support
    - Support multiple students within an inclusive classroom setting
    - Balance attention to the academic, social, physical, and management needs of the each student in the group
  - Coordination
    - Coordinate with the classroom teacher and other support staff to ensure effective support for all students
    - Facilitate group activities and interactions among students

In all roles, effective communication, collaboration, and commitment to the goals outlined in the IEP are essential for providing comprehensive support to students with diverse needs. Additionally, being flexible and adaptable in responding to the varying educational environments are key attributes for success in these roles.

### **Resources:**

For more information on what your day to day job may look like, please refer to the link below.  
<https://www.nysut.org/members/school-related-professionals/about-nysut-school-related-professionals>

## Behavioral Expectations

**Please take time to review the practices listed below that highlight professionalism when working with children in your care:**

- Respect and support each child in your care and acknowledge diversity and individual differences in growth, background, values, and beliefs.
- Build connections and demonstrate genuine interest about all children in your care.
- Keep information about children, youth, and their families **confidential**.
- Provide a variety of developmentally appropriate choices and experiences for children and youth in your care.
- Be knowledgeable of and have developmentally appropriate expectations about children's behaviors and be proactive when dealing with challenging behaviors.
- Honor individual differences in children and strive to address the unique needs of those you serve.
- Be mindful of interactions with students in front of peers, and utilize one-on-one conversations when correcting student behavior and/or explaining consequences for poor behavioral choices
- Do **not** post your students on social media.



