



PEN Notes: Fact Sheet #33

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→ LOST IN A MAZE OF ACRONYMS ←

There are so many acronyms or educational jargon in our schools. Knowing the jargon makes it easier to connect with others when discussing the same subject. If you are going to be interacting with teachers, school districts, superintendents, and even the Department of Education you should be familiar with their jargon in order to understand the great things that schools are doing with your children.

Here are some commonly used terms:

AYP is the progress, or improvement, made by students in learning the academic standards as measured by the PAWS assessment. Called Adequate Yearly Progress, there is a minimum level that each school must achieve each year— measuring this year's 5th graders and comparing them with last year's 4th graders to see if they have made progress— and that it is an adequate amount. The amount is set each year and is part of the movement toward better accountability for schools. If the scores do not show an increase, then it is said the schools have not made AYP. After a couple of years of not making progress, there are certain steps schools have to go through to increase students' academic progress.

DIBELS stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills and is a data system that assesses the 5 Big Ideas in learning to read and write as identified by the National Reading Panel. Those 5 areas are: Phonemic Awareness, Alphabetic Principle, Accuracy and Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension. As teachers are instructing children how to read, they are monitoring students at each level to see if they are learning. If the student struggles at any point, the teacher can stop and re-teach a skill the student is not getting.

ESEA is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act- which is the federal law that funds all primary and secondary public education. It emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability. It is reauthorized every five years or so- the latest is No Child Left Behind of 2001. President Obama's administration will put out another ESEA, which will go through the legislative process to be passed by Congress. It will have a different name other than NCLB, but will still be the ESEA in addition to the name the President gives it.

IDEA is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act- the federal special education law. Last reauthorized in 2004, this is the law that requires free, appropriate, public education to provide specially designed instruction and supports to students with disabilities. A main component of the IDEA is that parents should be members of the school team any time a decision is made about their child. Together the team decides what the child's individual needs are and how the needs will be addressed appropriately to support the student's learning.

IEP Individualized Education Program under the IDEA. The IEP is a written plan for a student with a disability that is developed, at least annually, by a team of that child's parents and professionals knowledgeable about the student. The plan describes the strengths of the child and the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child, and when, where, and how often services will be provided. The IEP is required by federal law for all children who meet the state criteria as defined by state rules and regulation of having a disability that affects their learning. The IEP must include specific information about how the student will be served and what goals he or she should be working towards to make progress in the general curriculum.

MAP stands for Measures of Academic Progress and is a test that school districts in Wyoming use a couple of times a year to measure what students have learned in math, reading, writing and science. They typically call it the district assessment, while PAWS is a statewide assessment.

PAWS the Proficiency Assessment for Wyoming Students, is the statewide assessment (test) given to all Wyoming students in grades three through eight and grade eleven. The results of this assessment inform the school, the district and the state about the progress and improvement efforts needed for individual students, schools and districts as a whole.

PBIS Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, is sometimes called PBS or positive interventions and is a problem-solving model for preventing inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing positive behavior. Like Response to Intervention, it is a tiered approach with the first level used school wide, defining expectations and modeling appropriate behavior. The second tier, or level involves is strategies for groups of students who might be at risk for problem behavior. The third tier or level targets specific needs of individual students who might have a pattern of inappropriate behavior.

PLC Professional Learning Community, describes a group who are united in their commitment to student learning. The community engages in a variety of activities including sharing a vision, working and learning collaboratively, visiting and observing other classrooms, and participating in shared decision making. The benefits include reduced isolation of teachers, better informed and committed teachers, and academic gains for students. As an organizational arrangement, PLC is seen as a great strategy to target student learning across the curriculum as it breaks larger populations of students into smaller more focused groups.

RtI is a tiered system of interventions used to catch students to learn to read and write before they fail. The first level is whole group work in the classroom, which moves up to the second level or tier of small group interventions when lack of

progress shows a student needs more instruction. The third level or tier provides more intense and customized interventions to support a student's learning. All of these are used before sending a child to the next step, which is an evaluation for special education services and supports.

Title 1 technically called Financial Assistance to Local Educational Agencies for the education of children of low-income families. It is the largest federal education funding program for schools. It's aim is to help students who are behind academically or at-risk of falling behind. School funding is based on the number of low-income children, generally those eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program. Many of the major requirements in the No Child Left Behind federal law are outlined in Title I - Adequate Yearly Progress, teacher and paraprofessional standards, accountability, sanctions for schools designated for improvement, standards and assessments, annual state report cards, professional development and parent involvement. Title I used to be known as Chapter I.

ACRONYM GLOSSARY

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
ESEA	Elementary & Secondary Education Act
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEPs	Individualized Education Program
MAP	Measures of Academic Progress
PAWS	Proficiency Assessment for WY Students
PBIS	Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports
PLC	Professional Learning Community
RtI	Response to Intervention
Title 1	The first chapter or "Title" of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

While there are many more acronyms and phrases which we hear and do not always understand— these are a few heard most often. The main point, though, is to encourage families to **ASK** what teachers are talking about, even if it might feel embarrassing to stop a teacher in the middle of their report. Families will be rewarded with a greater understanding of how their child measures up against what is being taught, the different types of assessments used and overall how they are doing in school. Teachers, school staff and administrators should also stop and think for a moment about the language used in conferences and daily conversations. If everyone comes away from every conversation with a greater understanding of what each other is saying, this will help in building stronger relationships and partnerships between schools and families. After all, the goal is the same for all, to increase student success!