

Free and appropriate public education (FAPE)

Here's what this important legal right means for students who need help in school.



is for free.

Free means the government pays for the education of students with disabilities. There's no cost to families. However, families do have to pay the same extra school fees — for example, sports and club fees — that all students pay.



is for appropriate.

Appropriate means that kids who qualify get an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with services to meet their unique needs. Others may get a 504 plan that gives equal access to learning.



is for public.

Public means supervised by the public school. An IEP team — teachers, parents, and others — decides what services and support the student gets. In a few cases, the government may pay for kids with disabilities to attend private school.



is for education.

Education can include special education. It can also include related services, like speech therapy, counseling, or even transportation. The goal is for kids to make progress in school and be prepared for the future.