

PYP
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL
NEEDS POLICY
International Community School

International Community School is an International Baccalaureate World School serving Kindergarten--5th grades. As a public charter school in Decatur, Georgia, we accept all students regardless of their race, sex, gender, or exceptionality in an inclusive environment, which is reflective in our inclusion policy. The International Community School Inclusion Policy is designed to address the needs of students with exceptionalities within the IB Mission for ALL students to be internationally minded and successful learners.

Overview:

Philosophy: We believe that all learners have unique needs to consider when helping them to meet/exceed their academic and non-academic potential. To provide access to the IB PYP at International Community School (ICS), we apply approaches and support systems that address the individual needs and varied learning styles of students, including those identified with special needs (special education, gifted and talented and English Language Learners). By recognizing the diversity of our collective learning community, we support the development of internationally minded people.

Practice: At ICS, students with varying disabilities, English Language Learners (ELL) and students identified as gifted and talented are educated the majority of the time in general education environments with appropriate support and services. Identified students receive support from teachers with specialized degrees and/or certifications in these areas through a co-teaching model or through a pull-out program for part of their instructional day. We build positive learning communities in which a culture of collaboration encourages and supports problem solving for all students. The district provides a continuum of placements where appropriate instruction is available to students with disabilities requiring special education and related services in accordance to federal and state laws.

Differentiation: At ICS, all students receive instruction that enables them to succeed within the range of their approaches to learning, abilities and interests. Differentiation is seen as the process of identifying, with each learner, the most effective strategies for achieving agreed upon goals. Dynamic groupings within classrooms, tiered lessons, use of pre -assessments and formative assessments to discover students' strengths and areas to focus targeted instruction on, open ended learning engagements, and provision of materials (such as leveled reading materials, enrichment activities, and choice menus) designed to address students' level of readiness are some examples.

Stakeholders at International Community School

ICS's inclusion practices have several stakeholders for our inclusion policy to be successful amongst students with a variety of needs. The following personnel are vital to the implementation of this policy:

- Board of Education Members
- Administration (Principal, Assistant Principals, and IB Coordinators)
- Special Education Teachers and Early Intervention Teachers
- School Psychologists
- Guidance Counselors
- Student Support Team Coordinators
- General Education Teachers
- Specials Teachers (Art, Music, P.E. and Science),
- Parent and Guardians

- Students

For the stakeholders that are employed with ICS, they will become aware of this policy through professional development, and all others will be aware through the publication of this policy on public documents and media such as handbooks, websites.

Definition of Inclusion at International Community School

Inclusion at ICS consists of educating all students in their least restrictive environment where peers are together as much as possible. For most students, the least restrict environment begins in the general classroom setting for academic subjects where two or more teachers work in a co teaching environment to instruct students. However, students may receive instruction and may be tested in a small group environment according to their Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans. Some students receive one to two periods of Early Intervention Services that may require some instructional time outside the whole group environment. PYP Gifted and Talented students only spend one period per day outside the classroom for Gifted Services. Overall, students are in various tiers based on their needs, and regardless of their levels of instruction all students participate in the International Baccalaureate Programme at ICS.

How does the school's policy on inclusive education reflect the IB standards and Practices?

ICS is currently an International Baccalaureate World school for our PYP Programme. Each programme promotes an inclusive education based on the IB Standards and Practices. Even though our inclusion policy reflects Kindergarten- to Fifth grades, please read how each Programme's standards are reflected in our inclusion policy.

PYP Inclusive Education at International Community School

ICS's PYP Programme consists of Kindergarten- to 5th grade. As all students at ICS participate in IB, it reflects the PYP requirement of the school implementing the PYP for all students (Standard A: 9a). Students remain in the whole class setting as much as possible, but based on students' needs you may have incidents where students are taken out of the homeroom teacher's classroom based on Gifted/Talented services, IEP services, EIP services, 504 plans, etc. ICS supports students with special needs and the homeroom teachers that teach them through our special education team as well as through our gifted/talented team, student support team, guidance counseling services, medical services, and psychological services. (Standard B2: 8).

Due to the large amount of staff that have to collaboratively work together for students to be successful, ICS provides two planning periods for the homeroom teachers, so they can work together for collaborative planning. During collaborative planning, teachers brainstorm on the most effective, research based methods on how students can meet unified expectations. They plan differentiated lessons for students in various tiers of instruction based on what they know and what they can do (Standard C3: 3, 9, 10). When planning, teachers also use the Programme of Inquiry (POI) that encompasses a scope of learning, student achievement, and reflection of diversity (Standard C2: 5,6,8). Much of this planning is based on data through Response to Intervention, Standardized test Scores, and yearly benchmarks along with summative and formative assessments (Standard C1: 5,6,7) (Standard C4:3). Conclusively, ICS works diligently through specialized services, collaboration, data, and reflection for all students to learn.

The Local, National, and International legal Inclusion Obligations of International Community School

ICS is obligated to follow local, state, federal, and international laws regarding students specifically with students with 504s and IEPs but any student with a variety of needs. Please read the legal obligations from each agency.

Local Agency- DeKalb County School District

- Response to Intervention

DeKalb County School District follows Georgia's four tiered Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions to provide appropriate and effective Response to Intervention services, which incorporates universal screening, targeted interventions, and a team approach to decision-making and the development and implementation of services.

Tiers I and II Interventions are facilitated in the general education environment by grade level and department teams. Tier II interventions are more needs based and implemented in part by the EIP math and reading teachers. Documentation from each tier is utilized to make decisions regarding interventions and movement between tiers.

Tier III Interventions and services are facilitated by the Student Support Team (SST). The SST Chairperson ensures the process is followed and team decisions are made according to the outcome of data, indicating student progress.

Tier IV Interventions and services are facilitated through specialized programs or instructional delivery models such as the Program for Exceptional Children, English Language Learners, or Gifted Instruction.

Early Intervention Program

Children start school at a designated chronological age, but differ greatly depending on their development and experiences. The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is designed for students in grades kindergarten through fifth who are at risk of not reaching or maintaining academic grade level performance, and provides intervention services for qualifying students to remediate foundational skills needed for academic success. It provides additional instructional support and resources to help students who are performing below grade level obtain the necessary academic skills in the shortest possible time.

Program Structure

The program design is developed in coordination with regular instruction and other educational programs. Development and evaluation of the program involves teachers, administrators, and parents at the school level. The Early Intervention Program includes three components: Teaching Staff - Early Intervention Program is staffed by certified teachers with experience and expertise in teaching students with diverse needs and abilities. Early intervention funds provide additional staff beyond that provided through regular classroom funds. Delivery models are selected by the school administrator and staff based on the unique needs of the students and school. The school may select any of the state approved models to address the needs of the students served. An instructional segment for grades K--3 is defined as a minimum of 45 minutes daily. A segment for grades 4--5 is defined as a minimum of 50 minutes of daily instruction.

Student Support Team

The Student Support Team process is a state-mandated and school-based intervention process. As outlined in Georgia's Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions, Student Support Team Compliance serves as the basis for facilitation of Tier 3 -Response to Intervention services.

The purpose of the Student Support Team is to provide support to both students and teachers with the outcome being improved student performance. (GaDoe: SST Resource Manual, 2008)

The Response to Intervention District Team is committed to providing training, resources, and guidance to school based teams to help ensure the delivery of high quality instruction, research based interventions, progress monitoring, and prompt identification of at -risk students.

Student Support Teams are comprised of interdisciplinary teachers, resource personnel, parents, and when necessary, the student. The team uses a systematic, problem-solving approach to address learning and/or behavior difficulties experienced by students. This includes students who are experiencing a lack of academic progress, are medically challenged, display behavior or emotional challenges, are Section 504 eligible or are in need of homebound instruction.

Section 504

Congress prohibited discrimination against persons with disabilities in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, in a segment most often referred to simply as ‘Section 504.’ This was a broadly worded prohibition that covers both children and adults. It applies to programs that receive any federal financial assistance.

Section 504 prohibits discrimination against individuals whose physical or mental impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities, including: caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, and learning.

- Under Section 504, schools must afford students with disabilities equal opportunity.
- Many students, who fall within the Section 504 category, are medically involved, and the disability is temporary in nature.
- Section 504 accommodations are delivered and monitored through the Student Support Team.

Special Education

- Mission

The Mission of the DeKalb County School District’ Department of Special Education is to assure student achievement by providing a continuum of appropriate, specialized services and supports.

- Vision

The Vision for the DeKalb County School District’ Department of Special Education is that our diverse learners meet and exceed state and national standards and seize opportunities for continuing their educational, social, and career development in a global environment.

Gifted and Talented

- Vision

The Office of Gifted and Talented Education in the Dekalb Public School System will be the architects of globally competitive, critical, and creative thinkers of the 21st century. We will create programming designed to ensure the continuous development of advanced learners throughout their educational career. Gifted and Talented education will provide appropriate differentiated instruction for gifted learners which will enable them to reach their maximum potential.

- Mission

The Office of Gifted and Talented Education will provide learning environments which foster personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and technical communication skills for citizenship in the global environment of the 21st Century. We will design and deliver rigorous and relevant curriculum to students in grades K-12 to address their academic and intellectual needs. Our mission is not limited to those identified as gifted and talented, rather it encompasses all learners in the DeKalb County School District as we create opportunities that expose all learners to gifted pedagogy. (www.dekalb.k12.ga.us)

Legal Regulations

State Agency-State of Georgia Department of Education (GADOE)

International Community School is subject to follow legal regulations from the State of Georgia Department of Education. (www.gadoe.org)

Federal Agency-United States Department of Education (ED)

International Community School is subject to follow legal regulations from the United States Department of Education (www.ed.gov)

With our special education services, International Community School is compliant with guidelines from the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (www.idea.ed.gov)

With our students with 504 plans, International Community School is compliant guidelines with the Americans with Disability Act (www.ada.gov)

International Agency- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

ICS's Special Educational Needs Policy corresponds to the UNESCO policy guidelines on inclusion in education. The Mission of the UNESCO policy stems from The World Declaration on Education for All, adopted in Jomtien, Thailand (1990), who set out an overall vision: universalizing access to education for all children, youth and adults, and promoting equity. ICS is committed to educating all students enrolled in our school fairly and equitably.

(<http://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/iea/index.php?menuid=47>)

Confidentiality of Student Records at International Community School

ICS's Confidentiality of Student Records reflect the policy guidelines in the Parental Rights for Special Education. Students' educational records are private. Parents can ask to have copies of only their child's records. School employees involved with a particular student may see a child's records and do not require a parent's permission. Nonetheless, they are obligated to keep a child's records confidential to parties that are not involved with that particular student. Besides school employees, no one else may see the results of a child's records without the parental consent.

Technological Resources at International Community School

Even though ICS has made strides with its technology department by adding more laptop carts, a computer lab, iPads, and a computer for each teacher, we are still in need of more technological resources specifically uniformed means of communicating progress to parents as well as more technology within the classrooms such as Smartboards and more computers. In this technological age, we continue to increase our stock in this area so that our students can continue to reach out across the globe in our quest for international mindedness.