



Atlas Program

Vision

The vision of the Atlas program is to model and teach students lifelong independent living skills, communication skills, and social and behavioral regulation in order to be productive members of their school and community. Students will be provided exceptional, personalized learning with structured and supportive specialized education services to meet individual student needs. In the Atlas Program, students feel a sense of safety, comfort, and belonging in order to practice lagging skills in a quiet, calm environment surrounded by supportive staff before navigating independently in the general education setting.

Program Description

The Atlas program provides each student with individualized instruction, support, and services needed to access the general education setting when appropriate to provide social interactions and academic opportunities with peers and to increase independence. All district center-based programs are multi-categorical dependent on student needs. This program primarily serves students who have qualified for special education services under the categories of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Other Health Disabilities, or Developmental Delay (DD).

The Atlas program uses a systematic approach to learning that incorporates evidenced based instruction, along with the use of dynamic instructional strategies and methodologies. Atlas utilizes natural environments for instruction, positive behavioral programming, educationally based sensory activities, and inclusion into the general education classroom with mainstream peers to participate in activities as determined by the Individualized Education Plan team. Students may need support throughout their day with schedules, changes in routine, academics, and independence. The continuum of services from elementary to high school focuses on highly structured, individualized programming in:

- Functional skills and routines
- Pre-academic to academic skills
- Intensive communication and language development as well as reciprocal social interaction
- Social skills
- Emotional and behavioral development and regulation (requiring intensive behavior support)
- Transition skills including independent living, community participation, recreation and leisure, post-secondary and employment

Students in the program have unique needs that may or may not include cognitive impairments and most have significant needs in the areas of social, emotional, sensory, and behavioral development and regulation. Students typically receive specialized educational services for more than 60% of their school day. Staff focus on individual students' positive attributes and strengths to assist in developing proficiency in skill areas, accessing the community, preparing for life after high school, and daily living skills.

Students will be provided instruction and participation in the classroom at the grade level of their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible. Students may also participate in community-based learning and experiences, including work experience and post-secondary activities. Students' Individualized Education Plan goals and objectives are continuously monitored to guide all specialized educational services and curriculum decisions.

Service Delivery Model and Staffing

A full continuum of services are available and provided as indicated on a student's IEP. Services may be delivered in a variety of ways including individual and small group instruction in the center-based classroom for all or part of the school day, as well as specialized educational support being provided within the general education setting.

Each Atlas center-based program classroom consists of approximately 6-8 students with one licensed special education teacher and paraprofessional support. Additional services and supports are available based upon the student's Individualized Education Plan goals and needs. Related services staff and supports that may be provided as determined by student need include but are not limited to: occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, school psychologists, social workers, developmental/adapted physical education teachers, physical therapists, vision specialists, teacher of the physically impaired, behavioral specialists, job coaches, deaf and hard of hearing teachers, work experience coordinators, and school nurses.

Placement

For placement in a center-based program, such as Atlas, students must be eligible to receive special education services. Prior to program referral, school teams must consult with the building facilitator and special education team, and attempt specialized educational interventions in the student's current environment. The district referral process, utilizing the Elementary Review Team, Middle School Review Team, and Secondary Review Team, needs to be closely followed as outlined to ensure that each student is educated in his or her least restrictive environment (LRE). A person knowledgeable in the student's primary disability category must be on the student's Individualized Education Plan team. Program placement is an Individualized Education Plan team decision based on student needs and supported by the current evaluation and intervention results.

Location

Atlas is a district-wide program that has locations at Minnewashta Elementary (K-5), Minnetonka Middle School West (6-8) and Minnetonka High School (9-12).