

INCLUSION POLICY SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY

This document is designed for cadets, parents, and teachers in order to clearly define the Sarasota Military Academy (SMA) Inclusion Policy as it applies to participation in JROTC and academics. Through professional development efforts, Sarasota Military Academy is implementing data-driven instruction as a tool for continuous improvement in each discipline. As a working document, the Inclusion Policy for SMA is compiled and reviewed annually by the Executive Director of Schools, faculty, administration, ESE/ESOL Liaison, and counseling department.

SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY SPECIAL EDUCATION/INCLUSION PHILOSOPHY

Sarasota Military Academy has a responsibility, for all cadets, to provide equal access to the curriculum and academic rigor, regardless of individual abilities and needs. We support all cadets in developing skills and knowledge to their fullest potential, both as leaders and learners, by providing relevant and varied instruction that consistently incorporates differentiation for diverse learning styles and needs. SMA recognizes that cadets come from a variety of cultures and backgrounds, and that they have a range of academic, physical, or other special needs. There are many cadets that have a recognized special educational need, cadets with special needs that have yet to be identified, and cadets with medical issues that require certain accommodations.

Although the JROTC program can be rigorous and intense for many cadets, this does not preclude the admittance of cadets with special needs in accordance with federal law.

Sarasota Military Academy creates a cadet-centered environment that promotes and encourages curiosity while balancing high levels of rigor with high levels of support where all cadets can achieve success in the JROTC program. This means ensuring that cadets receive meaningful and equitable access to the curriculum, while safeguarding their interests and removing barriers, so they can be provided with the least restrictive environment possible. Cadets are taught strategic time and stress management skills, with a focus on critical thinking and problem solving. We regularly collaborate with families to understand and support learners' diverse needs. We view a cadet's education as a partnership between the cadet, the parent(s)/guardian(s), and the school. SMA believes that all cadets should be responsible for their own learning by taking an active role in identifying, monitoring, and meeting their own learning needs and abilities.

Teachers differentiate through various means including, but not limited to:

- Content – Modifying resources and learning goals.
- Process – Providing variety or choice in how cadets will learn.
- Product – Capitalizing on cadets' learning preferences and strengths by permitting them choice when demonstrating their learning.

At SMA, inclusion may take many forms including, but not limited to:

- Cadets in General Education classrooms.
- Access to common curriculum for all cadets.
- Support in the General Education classroom from Educational Specialists.

- Support from Educational Specialists in alternative settings.
- Small group instruction, or one-on-one support.
- Additional time to work in another setting.
- Services are provided to meet academic, social, or behavioral needs.

All members of the SMA community are expected to embrace and put into practice the *SMA Special Education/Inclusion Policy*: to include the Board, administrators, faculty and staff, parents/guardians, and community partners. This policy outlines the process implemented at SMA to ensure that all cadets have access to the curriculum, so that they can fulfill the mission of SMA.

Cadets Who Receive Support

Cadets who receive support at SMA include, but are not limited to:

- Special Education cadets who have an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in place
- Cadets with language and communication difficulties
- English Language Learners (ELL) who have a barrier in the language of instruction
- Cadets who are in need of counseling support
- Cadets with medical or health issues which require a 504
- High achieving or gifted cadets who are driven to pursue further inquiry
- Cadets that have been identified through the SWST process as requiring additional support within the classroom
- Cadets with specific learning needs in math and/or reading will receive additional intervention

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL REQUIREMENTS

In order to effectively meet the needs of our special education cadets, SMA adheres to the policies and practices set forth by federal, state and local authorities for the education of exceptional children as outlined below:

U.S. American Statutes Relating to Special Education

The following United States legal requirements inform the provision of special educational services at Sarasota Military Academy. The Fourteenth Amendment protects cadets' right to a **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**, which includes Equal Protection and Due Process clauses.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504

Section 504 is a part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities, public and private, that receives federal financial assistance. It is intended to establish a "level playing field" so that cadets with disabilities have equal opportunity to be successful, especially focusing on cadets who do not qualify for special education services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

“Sec. 504. No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States, as defined in Section 7 (6), shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”[2]

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

This law was originally passed by Congress in 1975 and most recently amended in 2004. IDEA requires that public schools provide FAPE services to children with disabilities in the least restrictive, appropriate environment for every child. As part of the IDEA requirements a team of teachers, administrators, parents/guardians and the cadet create an IEP, which specifies which services will be provided, how they will be provided, which accommodations and modifications will be provided, and goals that will be sought. The IEP also describes how cadets’ disabilities impact their learning and their present levels of performance.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 amendments to Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965

This act urges schools to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice by requiring school accountability, measuring adequate yearly progress, regulating highly qualified teachers, requiring support and applying regulations for schools deemed as underperforming.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990

This civil rights law prohibits discrimination solely on the basis of disability including in education at public schools. The law protects “Any individual with a disability who: (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities; or (2) has a record of such impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.”[3] Reasonable accommodations are required for eligible cadets with a disability to perform essential functions of being a cadet and may involve job training or placement.

Section 2033.428 Florida Statutes (F.S.)

Section 2033.428 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.) provides for test accommodations and identifies criteria for waiver of FCAT, FCAT 2.0 and EOC Assessment requirements for high school graduation (Which will also apply to eighth grade cadets enrolled in high school credit courses).

Assistive Technology Act

Originally passed by Congress in 1988 and most recently amended in 2010, this act promotes people’s awareness of, and access to, assistive technology devices and services, so they can more fully participate in education, employment, and daily activities on a level playing field with other members of their communities.[4]

School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Our Leadership Team, ESE department and faculty recognize that appropriate and ongoing professional support is essential for faculty to competently, creatively and effectively differentiate and succeed at inclusive instruction that supports all cadets' needs. Our professional development workshops regularly focus on inclusive educational strategies, positive behavior interventions, differentiation, and Kagan strategies.

School Wide Support Team (SWST)

Twice monthly SWST meets to discuss cadets who have not qualified for Special Education services, but who may be having difficulty in the classroom (academically, socially, behaviorally, etc.), students with IEPs, 504, ELL, and all students experiencing difficulty. The team determines strategies to support struggling cadets, which often involves implementing and documenting supportive interventions. If sustained, varied, and documented interventions do not succeed in sufficiently supporting cadets, the team may recommend an evaluation for Special Education services. A parent may request an evaluation at any time. The cadet may also obtain a 504 plan based on a medical diagnosis and team meeting with the 504 coordinator, parents and teachers. Additionally, cadets may be referred to Response to Intervention.

Response to Intervention (RtI)

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a process that provides intervention and educational support to all cadets at increasing levels of intensity based on their individual needs. The goal is to prevent problems and intervene early so that cadets can be successful.

The RtI team meets bi-weekly and consists of the Guidance Counselor, School Psychologist, Speech and Language Pathologist, Director of Instruction, Dean of Cadets, Assistant Head of School, ESE/ELL Liaison, and members of the Pedagogical Leadership Team as needed.

The first step of the RtI process is typically observation. Such observations allow staff to determine strategies for use in the classroom settings. The RtI team will continue to monitor cadet progress and collaborate with the classroom teachers in order to determine if the cadet is responding to the prescribed strategies. If the cadet is deemed not responding, the team may request a special education evaluation that includes cognitive, academic and behavioral testing. If the cadet is found to have a particular special need, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team will convene to develop a plan for the cadet.

The IEP team determines the cadets' need(s) and develops the accommodations in an IEP or Section 504 plan. Evidence must show that the cadet has been found eligible for services through one of these plans. IEPs and 504s are reviewed yearly.

English Language Learners (ELL)

All cadets, new to Sarasota County Schools are given a Home Language Survey. Cadets who are then designated as English Language Learners (ELL), or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), are provided additional support throughout the day. Our ELL liaison works closely with teachers of all content areas to plan lessons and activities to reach cadets within a wide range of English proficiency levels. This provides the subject area teachers with strategies they can use in all of their classes. Through collaboration SMA is able to provide support for cadets who need indirect ELL services, and extended support for cadets who need direct services. While in the program ELL cadets are assessed using the *Comprehensive English Language Learner Assessment* (CELLA). The function of CELLA is to monitor cadets' progress in acquiring academic English. The ELL Liaison is responsible for addressing any concerns raised on the assessment and making any necessary changes to the support that the cadet receives. ELL cadets may receive extended time on assessments and use of a mother tongue dictionary. During a performance review, if it is decided that a cadet is prepared to be exited from the ELL program, an ELL committee meeting is held with the family in attendance. A cadet must meet two of the five criteria established to determine English proficiency to be exited. Upon exiting cadet is monitored every marking period for three marking periods. After the third review a cadet is then reviewed at the end of two years. If a cadet needs additional support in English development after he/she has been exited, the cadet can be re-entered into the ELL program, as long as it is within two years of the exit date.

Exceptional Student Education (ESE)

In meeting cadet's needs, SMA abides by federally mandated yearly updates and 3-year reevaluations to measure ESE cadets' progress and needs. This monitoring is carried out within the school through IEP teams, work with specialists, level meetings, and impromptu meetings and collaboration as necessary.

Section 504

SMA ensures that all cadets who are disabled within the definition of Section 504 are identified, evaluated, and provided appropriate educational services, handled within the Counseling department.

SMA will consider the existence of a disability and possible Section 504 protection when a cadet " 'Clearly' has a physical issue and/or temporary physical issues which primarily affect caring for oneself, or another major life activity, and not noticeably affecting learning." Additionally, considerations will be given to, "A pattern of cadet performance which may indicate the presence of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits learning or equal access to the school environment that has been successfully responsive to regular education strategies and interventions using Problem Solving/Response to Intervention (PS/RtI) model." [5]

The counseling department utilizes the following 504 process: Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a disabled individual is defined as any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded

as having an impairment. Major life activities include caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working (Rule 6A-19.001, F.A.C.).

A careful analysis is required to determine if the cadet has an impairment or condition that is severe enough to limit a major life activity and whether the cadet is qualified to receive aids, services, or accommodations for instruction and assessment, including the FCAT, ?FCAT 2.0, EOC Assessments, or FAS. Cadets with a temporary disability, such as a broken arm, may require accommodations for a limited time. A Section 504 plan may be developed for the cadet to access accommodations. The cadet must use the accommodation regularly in the instructional setting. For example, the cadet with the broken arm will need accommodations for writing in classroom activities as well as for assessments.

Selection of Accommodations

Through the IEP or Section 504 planning process, a team of professionals, family members, and the cadet make decisions about which accommodations the cadet needs for instruction and for state and district testing programs. The team considers the cadet's learning and behavior characteristics. The need for or type of accommodations is not determined by the disability category. The team will utilize information from the evaluation in order to determine the need for any accommodations, as well as the type of accommodation that may be necessary. When considering accommodations, it is important to obtain input from the parents, ESE staff, the teachers who will be responsible for delivering the accommodations, and the cadet.

It is important to measure the effect of the accommodations to verify the cadets need. Data collected before and after the implementation of the accommodation can show whether the accommodation improves cadet performance. The IEP or Section 504 planning team will also base decisions for continuation of the accommodation on cadet data.

General Guidelines for Accommodations

At SMA, accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. Cadets with special education needs must be held to the same learning objectives and criterion, as identified by the International Baccalaureate Organization. SMA stakeholders understand that by changing the learning expectations (through modifications) during instruction or assessments, the cadet's opportunity to learn critical concepts is greatly reduced. Therefore, it is our intention to focus on accommodations necessary for each cadet during instructional practices so that the cadet may meet the appropriate IB objectives.

The following guidelines should be considered when making decisions about accommodations for instruction and assessment:

- Accommodations should facilitate an accurate demonstration of what the cadet knows or can do.

- Accommodations should not provide the cadet with an unfair advantage or interfere with the validity of the test. They must not change the underlying skills the test measures.
- Accommodations must be necessary for the cadet to demonstrate knowledge, ability, or skill.
- Accommodations for the FCAT or Florida Alternate Assessment, FSA, or EOC's, must be the same or nearly the same as the cadet uses in classroom instruction and assessment activities.

The cadet may need certain kinds of accommodations for specific assignments or learning activities. Teachers are encouraged to provide such accommodations on a trial basis as long as they fit within these decision guidelines. A list of accommodations may be found in the Third Edition (2010) of *Accommodations: Assisting Cadets with Disabilities* which is available through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Cadet Services, Florida Department of Education. Possible accommodations are not limited to that list.

Confidentiality

SMA policies and practices, including those about confidential information, are communicated to faculty at in-service meetings, professional development meetings, and in the SMA faculty and staff handbook. Only teachers who work directly with a cadet may access a cadet's files. IEPs are shared only with teachers who work directly with those cadets. The room that houses cadet records is housed in the counseling office. All faculty have access to this room, but must sign out information that they access.

Contracted Outside Service Providers

To meet the individual needs of each child and based on evaluation results and IEPs and 504 plans, outside experts such as psychologists, speech therapists, or occupational therapists are contracted as deemed appropriate.

Works Cited

[2]http://transition.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/504/disability_primer_1.html accessed Nov. 12, 2014.

[3]<http://dredf.org/advocacy/comparison.html> accessed Nov. 12, 2014.

[4]<http://nichcy.org/laws/ata#sums> accessed Nov. 12, 2014.

[5] "The School Board of Sarasota County Section 504 Policy and Procedures Manual." February, 2008.