

Westlake High School International Baccalaureate Special Educational Needs Policy

Philosophy

The faculty and staff of Westlake High School seek to provide equal opportunities to include all students in a rigorous education. Teaching in the IB Program at Westlake High School aims to provide appropriate levels of support and intervention to allow students to maximize their abilities and achieve academic success. Our goal is for students in to be given placement in courses that are in the most academically appropriate setting based on student learning needs.

The IB believes that all candidates should be allowed to demonstrate their ability under assessment conditions that are as fair as possible. Standard assessment conditions may put some candidates at a disadvantage by preventing them from demonstrating their level of attainment. Inclusive access arrangements may be applied in these circumstances if it is observed that they could reduce or minimize barriers for the candidate.

Inclusive access arrangements may be necessary due to:

- long-term learning support requirements
- temporary medical conditions
- additional language learning.

This access and inclusion policy highlights the inclusive access arrangements (also referred to as access arrangements) available for IB assessment in the Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP). However, the underpinning principle is that assessment is a part of learning and teaching. Therefore, this policy must be used to plan access arrangements for students during learning and teaching. Access arrangements must not only apply to students during summative IB assessments but also be available throughout the course of study (this includes all classroom work and formative assessments that are part of everyday learning and teaching). This policy must guide teachers in their plans to meet the access requirements of students for all their work during their educational journey in the school.

Purpose

This policy was developed to:

- Provide clarity on the IB definitions of access and inclusion.
- Advise on appropriate accommodations for equitable assessment procedures both inside and outside the classroom.

Definitions

Students with special assessment needs fall into different categories based on local, state, and national regulations. It is possible that a student will be served in multiple categories, in such the decision on course placement and choices is based on what is the most appropriate educational choice based on student need.

- **Special Education:** Fulton County Public Schools' Department of Special Education works to provide every student with a free appropriate public education that meets each student's unique educational needs in the least restrictive and most inclusive environment possible. The vision and mission of our county special education and psychological services department includes having student placed in the most rigorous academic setting possible based upon services as outlined in his Individual Education Plan (IEP). Students within the special education program are allowed all of the accommodations and support that the student's disability requires.
- **504:** Students who are not served by the Special Education Department are still allowed accommodations and services through section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Revised in 2008, all schools that receive federal funds are required to provide a "free appropriate public education" to each student with a disability regardless of the nature of the disability. Section 504 is separate funding not part of the Special Education Program. These students are allowed accommodations and services to allow them to receive the necessary support to achieve academic success. Students that suffer a temporary medical condition that limits their ability to perform at the previous level of study will be given accommodations as needed on a temporary basis.
- **English Language Learners (ELL):** As is the case with other programs, the goal of our county and school is to ensure students are placed in the most rigorous and inclusive environment as per their level of

proficiency with the English language as defined by Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State- to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) test scores, classroom performance and teacher evaluation.

For more detailed information about support for non-native speakers, please see the Westlake High School Language Policy.

- **Talented and Gifted Program:** Students identified as accelerated learners based on assessments of mental ability, achievement, creativity and motivation levels are served by the Accelerated and Gifted Program under the guidance of a local school Gifted Coordinator. In order to qualify for gifted services students must be referred and evaluated. Students scoring on nationally normed standardized assessments in the 90th percentile and above may be eligible for gifted services and can be evaluated. Students are identified through a combination of teacher and/or parent recommendations and standardized test scores on nationally normed tests (PSAT, SAT, CoGAT).

Responsibilities

The Westlake High School responsibilities for supporting students within our Special Education program are assigned to set staff members according to our county policies and regulations.

- Within the Special Education Department the student is assigned a case manager that assembles an IEP team including the following participants: at least one of the student's regular education teachers; at least one of the student's special education teachers; one or both of the student's parents; an individual who is knowledgeable about the availability of resources in the school district and who can commit resources; and, at the discretion of Fulton County Public Schools or the parents, other persons who have knowledge/special expertise regarding the student, including related services personnel. This team will develop an Individual Educational Plan for the students, providing for specific accommodations, related services and supports for the student with a disability. The IEP is reviewed annually and revised as needed with an IEP team.
- For students eligible for 504 services, each school within our district maintains a 504 coordinator. The 504 Coordinator is responsible for organizing Student Support Team meetings to address the individual needs of children not experiencing success in the school setting. The 504 Coordinator will additionally ensure all student 504 plans are reviewed every three years, inform teachers and staff of the students under a 504, and maintain a list of all students for each school year with 504 accommodations. For students undergoing temporary medical conditions a support team will be put in to place consisting of a counselor, administrator, teachers, parents, and student. This support team will work with the information provided by medical professionals to develop a plan that allows for temporary accommodations for the student while during the period under consideration. Should this condition become on-going, the team will work with parents to refer the student for additional services.
- Within the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP), each service is supported within the scope of the cluster support services as outlined in the previous bullets. No additional support is provided by the IB MYP Coordinator.
- Within the scope of the IB Diploma Programme, the IB Diploma Coordinator works with the personnel designated to support each student receiving special services. The IB Diploma Coordinator will inform IB teachers of the special accommodations each student received and will complete a request of inclusive access arrangements for each student requiring special accommodations in an IB Diploma class.

Process for Determining Eligibility

Students who have not been previously identified as requiring additional educational services or students who are not being adequately served in their current educational plan are evaluated using a Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Through the RTI process, a team of teachers, counselors, and administrators, in conjunction with the student's parent or guardian, work to monitor and evaluate student progress to determine if additional services are required to determine academic success.

Students who have not been previously identified as qualifying for gifted services may be referred to the Gifted Contact teacher for referral and eligibility screening by the local school Gifted Referral and Gifted Eligibility Committees. Students must score in the 90th percentile or above on normed measures of motivation, creativity, and achievement and in the 96th percentile or above in normed assessments of mental ability.

Differentiation and Accommodations

As each student's educational needs are different, we use a differentiated approach to allow for each student to receive the best academic setting possible based on their individual needs. Our school works to provide all teachers with ongoing professional development including differentiated instruction strategies and is continuing to receive support to produce classroom environments that ensure academic success through a variety of instructional methods.

Accommodations provided for each student depend on the nature of their educational needs as defined under state, local, and national guidelines. Below is a sample of some accommodations that have been previously allowed for our students, but this is not an exhaustive list. As a school we are open to using accommodations as needed to provide an appropriate and challenging education for all students as determined by their educational needs as defined by supported educational documentation.

Example of Accommodations Provided for students within the Special Education, and 504 programs. (Students receiving Gifted Services typically do not receive accommodations, unless they simultaneously qualify for another program. Gifted Students will receive accelerated learning designed to cater to the unique needs of a gifted learner.)

- Extended Time
- Preferential Setting
- Rest Breaks
- Extended Testing Sessions
- Adapted Writing Tools
- Adapted Calculators
- Verbal Response in English Only
- Technology Applications
- Audio Amplification
- Low Vision Aids
- Oral Reading of tests and passages
- Translation Dictionaries or Electronic Translators
- Oral Reading of Tests
- Adapted Furniture
- Use of Highlighters
- Color Overlays or Templates
- Large Print
- Use of Service Animals
- Visual Aids and Pictorial Representations
- Graphic Organizers
- Small Groups

Process for Review of Policy and Communication

The Westlake School Governance Council (SGC) evaluate the Special Education Policy annually. During this annual evaluation the policy will be reviewed for needed updates and revisions, as well as to assess the effectiveness of the implementation and to ensure the policy is communicated throughout the Westlake community.

The Special Education Needs Policy will be posted on school's website and links will be included in school bulletins following the annual review. The Westlake IB Special Education Needs Policy will be utilized in conjunction with our school's Academic Integrity, Assessment, Language, and Policies to help formulate student plans for placement and assessment.

References

- Diploma Programme: From Principles into Practice (ibo.org)
- Middle Years Programme: From Principles into Practice (ibo.org)
- Meeting Student Learning Diversity in the Classroom (ibo.org)
- Norcross IB Cluster Special Education Policy
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y759nZYGEjzvhRaSOLASStVTtd047GqyD/view>