

Somers Middle School

Inclusion and Diversity Policy

Somers Middle School is committed to meaningful growth, learning, and the social emotional well-being of our students. We strive to integrate the MYP framework, concepts and skills to nurture life-long learning and global awareness. We aim to engage students with a focus on reflection, open-mindedness and inquiry.

Statement of Philosophy for Inclusion and Diversity

At Somers Middle School we strive to provide an educational environment that includes access to meaningful and inquiry-based curriculum regardless of all student's backgrounds, identities, and abilities. All students are valued for their uniqueness. Teachers, teaching assistants and administration in the school community collaborate to make the learning experience supportive, appropriately rigorous and challenging based on individual student needs.

Developing a strong rapport, in a welcoming and affirming environment with and for students is crucial to achieve success. Students' experiences, backgrounds, cultural and diverse perspectives are embraced and respected.

Removing learning barriers and providing multiple access points through differentiation is another key to teaching learners at all levels. Multiple strategies can be implemented to ensure success and understanding for all learners to be able to reach his or her potential. Teachers differentiate through various means, including, but not limited to:

- Content - Accommodating resources and instructional tools
- Process - Providing different modalities for all students to learn
- Product - Understanding learning preferences and allowing all students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways

In addition, Somers Middle School is recognized as a "No Place For Hate" school. **No Place for Hate**® is a school climate improvement framework for preK-12 schools where all students can build a learning community of inclusivity, respect, and educational equity.

Eligibility of Services- **Special Education Program Description**

The Somers Central School District believes every child is unique and must have the supports and resources to explore an individualized learning experience. Our commitment to students is to provide the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), by considering all available programs and services within both the general and special education realms. Our goal is to foster life-long independent learners. The Special Education department serves students with mild to severe disabilities. Each student's Individual

Education Plan (IEP) is written to meet the child's specific social-emotional and academic needs in the most inclusive environment. In the MYP, students with an IEP will have the same learning experiences and access to resources. Working with the student services coordinator, teachers would employ appropriate modifications to help ensure the success a students.

Identification Process

If a classroom teacher has a concern about a student's progress in a certain area, he or she will employ interventions intended to improve the student's performance. There are a variety of methods a teacher may choose to accomplish this result. If the student continues to have difficulty, the teacher will bring the child up to the Whole Child Study Team (WCST) to meet with other school staff to discuss the child's needs, consider other interventions, and outline a method to carefully monitor the student's progress. Interventions are then put in place that are matched to student needs and monitored on a regular basis. If the interventions produce inconsistent or unsuccessful results, a referral to the Committee on Special education (CSE) occurs. The evaluation process includes a classroom observation, a social history completed by the parent, a review of the child's latest physical, educational achievement testing and psychological testing. Testing in the areas of speech and language, fine and gross motor, and behavioral needs may also be appropriate for a particular student. In addition to the school team referring a student, a parent has the right to refer a student at any time.

At the conclusion of the evaluation, several components are utilized to determine if a student qualifies. The intervention data and the results of the evaluation as well as the NYS Part 200 regulations, which outlines requirements for eligibilities, are all used to determine eligibility. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed based on the findings, along with input from the student, teachers, and/or family.

Supports – Continuum of Services

Related Services:

Developmental, corrective and other supportive services. Common related services include: speech-language, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, assistive technology services, school health services, interpreting services, school nurse services, audiology services. Does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, optimization of that device's functioning, maintenance or replacement of the device. May provide more than one related service, or related services in combination with other regular or special education programs.

Consultant Teacher Direct or Indirect:

Direct: to aide the student to benefit from the general education class instruction.

Indirect: to assist the general education teacher in adjusting the learning environment and/or modifying his/her instructional methods to meet the individual needs of the student with a disability who attends the general education class.

Consultant Teacher in Combination with Skills Period:

To meet the needs of a student who could benefit from the two types of services, but who does not need two hours per week of Consultant Teacher and three hours per week of Skills.

Special Class Skills:

To provide specialized supplementary small group instruction. This supplementary instruction is provided in addition to the general education or special education classroom instruction that the student receives. It is not provided in place of the student's regular instruction.

Integrated Co-Teaching:

To provide academic and specially designed instruction in the general education setting to integrated group of students. The responsibility for planning, delivering and evaluating instruction for all students is shared by the general and special education teachers.

Special Class:

To provide primary instruction that is specially designed to meet the similar needs of a group of students in a special class, separate from the non-disabled peers.

It is important to note that although New York State considers Integrated Co-teach to be among the most restrictive environments because of the amount of time a Special Education teacher is supporting students, Somers CSD often includes this placement in their LRE thinking because it allows students to be with their general education peers and therefore included for the entire school day.

504 Plan:

To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, caring for one's self and performing manual tasks), have a record of such an impairment, or be regarded as having such an impairment. Students who may only need accommodations to access curriculum or modifications when testing or related services rather than the support of a special education teacher, may qualify for a 504 plan instead of an IEP. Students who are eligible for a 504 do not need to go through the same evaluation process as students who are possibly eligible for an IEP. Similar to a student with an IEP, we believe a student with a 504 plan should be provided access to meaningful and rigorous curriculum regardless of the student's background, circumstances or ability. Our goal is to meet the individual needs of each learner and offer the supports that best allow access to the MYP program.

Advanced Learning Program (ALP): Programs for Acceleration, Challenge and Enrichment

We believe all students have talents and strengths and that giftedness can grow over time. We strive to meet each student at their current level of achievement, wherever that may be. All students are assessed for enrichment opportunities several times throughout their school career whether it be for overall cognitive ability, subject specific acceleration, or for enrichment opportunities in the arts or in leadership. There are several enrichment models utilized;

Our tier 3 pull-out model allows us to group gifted students by area of giftedness (cognition, creativity, subject area, art) in order to implement tasks to continue to push these students to reach their highest potential.

Our tier 2 model may include our ALP teacher going into general education classrooms to work with small groups of students or providing our general education teachers with support in order to help enrich the gifted students in their general education classes.

There is an enrichment math period for those students who meet the criteria.

Response to Intervention

The Somers Central School District utilizes a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) model in providing Academic Intervention Services to its students. This multi-tiered approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs increases long term outcomes for our students. The MTSS process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning.

At the middle school, we recognize that each child is an individual and has a diverse set of strengths and areas in need of growth. The middle school has implemented a WIN (What I need Now) model. This is a period set up to provide both enrichment opportunities and intervention, depending on what the student needs. Their needs are evaluated in an ongoing cycle, with opportunities for students to identify their own needs.

Mission for All Stakeholders

Engage all students in authentic learning experiences that maximize individual strengths and interests to promote life-long learning in a global society. The diverse social, emotional, and academic needs of all students are met through the flexible and well-coordinated efforts of the entire learning community. We believe that all students should have the opportunity to learn inclusively along with their peers.

Administration will:

- Ensure the principles of the Inclusion Policy are employed when interviewing and appointing new staff, at all levels.
- Ensure the policy and its related strategies and procedures are implemented.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support so they can fulfil their responsibilities

Special Education/Related Service Providers will:

- Coordinate the identification, assessment, and monitoring of each identified student · maintain and update a IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or assessment of each identified student's targets, differentiated teaching, adaptations, and outcomes
- Collaborate with the general education teacher to ensure that all students have the supports that they need
- Regular feedback on progress to parents
- Support students directly and indirectly in a large and small group setting
- Work with classroom teachers to identify anticipated barriers to learning

- Provide students with the tools to access the general education curriculum
- Evaluate, select, adapt and resources
- Help the student develop the skills needed to thrive in the regular classroom
- Establish a welcoming and affirming environment that is support of learning and allows for students to be risk-takers

Classroom Teachers will:

- Provide regular feedback on progress to parents
- Collaborate with special education/related services teachers to identify anticipated barriers to learning
- provide students with the tools to access the general education curriculum
- Provide grade level texts with appropriate supports to help all learning needs
- · help the student develop the skills needed to thrive in the regular classroom
- Establish a welcoming and affirming environment that is support of learning and allows for students to be risk-takers
- Utilize multiple assessment strategies to allow for student voice and choice, while allowing students opportunities to show what they know

Director of Student Services will:

- Shape, coordinate and evaluate whole-school policy concerning student services (ELL, Counselling, SEN, Enrichment, Wellness)
- Set up, oversee and share student records · apply or help colleagues to differentiate to meet students' needs and direct staff as necessary
- Plan and manage support staff work · advise on the need for referral to external professionals, liaise with said professionals, interpret and share reports.

Parents will:

- Communicate all information on their child's needs and any new information acquired during their time at SMS.
- Collaborate with the school to effectively support the student academically, emotionally, socially and physically both in and out of school.

Students will:

- Contribute to their own goals and plans
- Develop self-advocacy skills and take an active role in their learning
- Abide by the relevant school policies and procedures.
- Treat one another with respect and understanding in order to contribute to a safe and supportive learning environment.

Review of Policy:

The team of policy writers will meet annually to reflect, revise and update the policy as needed. All staff have reviewed the policy and have agreed to uphold its implementation in the school.

Policy Writers:

Jenna Schettino- MYP Coordinator; Individuals and Societies Teacher

Jeff Getman- Principal

Jennifer Mangone- Assistant Principal

Stacey Elconin- Director of Special Services

Dina Miller- Learning Support Coordinator

Karin Brill- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator

Marianna Breglio- Special Education Teacher; Co- Curriculum Leader

Andrea Hayden- Special Education Teacher; Co- Curriculum Leader

Tricia Baldes- Language and Literature Teacher

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