

Henry Foss High School

International Baccalaureate

Diploma Programm

Middle Years Programm



Special Education Needs / Inclusive Education Policy

Introduction

Our Mission Statement: Henry Foss High School develops every student to be inquiring, knowledgeable, and reflective through intercultural understanding and respect.

Our Vision Statement: Henry Foss High School will graduate every student with an International Baccalaureate (IB) education that prepares them for college, career, and life.

Our Equity and Access Statement: We believe that every student, staff, and community stakeholder should be treated equitably. Our focus is to eliminate disparities among all groups.

Henry Foss High School is an urban public high school in the Tacoma School District in Washington State, USA. Foss High School has been an approved IB Diploma Programme school since 1982. We have a mix of special education, traditional, and identified gifted students in grades 9 through 12. Because of declining enrollment and demographic shifts, our size has decreased over the past 10 years. For the 2025-2026 academic year, we have approximately 5 diploma candidates and another 7 candidates for the 2025-2026 academic year. We expect that number to grow over the next several years as interest in the program increases as well as the rebuilding of Hunt Middle School, previously and anticipated IB Middle Years Programme school.

To become more equitable in our distribution of students in and out of the Diploma Programme, and to encourage more students to participate in the Diploma Programme, the school made choices to add Middle Years Programme (2020). The goal is to create an “IB for all” environment at Foss. Aligned with that direction, starting in 2016, all juniors (except for students whose IEP necessitated an alternative course) took at least one diploma programme (DP) course in the studies in language and literature.

The diploma programme and middle years programme at our school is open access, as will be career programme; any student who wishes to take on the challenge of advanced coursework may do so, whether for a single class or the full diploma programme. We, do, however, **require** students to sit for the May exam session and complete the IB assessment requirements as part of their IB course experience. We make it a point to counsel students about their curricular choices. We do not believe in gatekeeping for college-preparatory coursework. We believe it is important to challenge students as appropriate to their individual needs and abilities while balancing their post-secondary goals.

Special Education Context

There are multiple ways that students can receive special education services, and for various levels of need. At Foss, students with severe cognitive and low-incidence disabilities are part of co-taught functional developmental and/or orthopedic programs. The educational goal is to teach students to be as independent as their disabilities will allow. The blended programs are designed to provide instruction in functional academic, life, and vocational skills. Students may receive instruction in basic arithmetic skills such as counting, and basic reading and writing skills. Other areas of instruction may include time-telling and calendar skills, personal hygiene, food preparation, and community access skills. Students are also getting introduced to learner profile attributes and MYP units, as appropriate. The learning objectives are individualized and align with the student's individualized education program (IEP) goals and objectives. Most of these students do not take general education classes. Because of the nature of their disabilities, none of these students have taken a diploma programme class. They are present and visible at the school and participate in activities as much as possible.

Students with less severe disabilities receive special education services in their least restrictive environments. Every student receiving special education services has an IEP, or Individualized Education Program. The IEP for each student specifies the amount and type of service they should receive, along with any modifications or accommodations which should be available to them in general education classes. In the 2020-21 school year, about 20% of our students were identified with special education needs. There is an emphasis in the Tacoma Public Schools on inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classes.

Most students who receive special education services at Foss participate in general education classes for a portion of their day, the number of classes being dependent upon their needs as outlined in their IEP. There are several options from self-contained behavior classes to para-educator supported in general education classes to co-taught classes, in some cases. Most students with IEP's at Foss spend 40% or more of their day in general education classes. A handful of students with an IEP attend only one Learning Resource Center (LRC) class, which equates to 80% or more in general education classes. Several of students with IEPs have taken diploma programme classes. Foss has also added cotaught math and English classes to allow for even more access to general education classes.

In some cases, because of IEP requirements, students cannot fit in certain MYP subject areas. Depending on where their needs are, students may or may not take a Language B course partly because they may have a second reading or math course. These exceptions are not the rule but designed to accommodate the needs of each learner.

District, State, and Federal Policies

We are driven first and foremost by the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. Washington has additional codes and policies on how to implement the act. The school district has additional policies to ensure that Tacoma Public Schools is meeting IDEA and Washington State codes. The following paragraph taken from OSPI's website (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction) outlines the philosophy and charge of special education with the state:

*“**Special Education** and related services are provided annually to about 130,000 eligible students in the state across 295 school districts. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that children with disabilities and the families of such children have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). IDEA is focused on improving educational results for children with disabilities. RCW 28A.155 provides the*

statutory basis for special education services in Washington, and WAC 392-172A provides the regulatory basis for both IDEA and RCW 28A.155.”

Descriptions of procedural safeguards can be accessed through OSPI, which talks about parents’ and students’ rights in the process. The following links more fully outline the district and state policies:

Tacoma Public Schools Special Education policy link:

<http://www.tacoma.k12.wa.us/information/departments/student-services/Pages/default.aspx>

State Special Education policy link: <http://www.k12.wa.us/specialed/>

Special Education Policy and Practice at Foss

A staff member or parent/guardian can refer a student for special education assessment. A student can also self-refer. Any referral for a student at Foss goes to a team of staff (a committee made up of school psychologist, counselors, teachers, administrators, and the school nurse). They review data including student’s files, feedback from teachers and parents, and then recommend any interventions. If the student is evaluated and qualifies for special education services in accordance with district, state, and federal policy, an IEP is created for them with student, parent, and teacher input. Teachers are informed of the modifications and accommodations required by the student’s IEP. Staff has the legal and ethical obligation of enacting the modifications and accommodations listed on IEPs.

IEPs are required by federal law to be updated at least once yearly prior to the expiration date. At Foss our special education teachers follow best practice by holding the annual IEP review a week before the due date to ensure parents can request changes before the IEP is implemented. IEPs can be reviewed as many times as needed in a year. Most often IEPs are reviewed more than once a year, or earlier than required in the following situations:

- At parent/student request
- When a student has a reevaluation that changes their services (no longer qualifies in a subject area or needs an additional subject area covered by the IEP)
- When the team feels like adequate progress towards their goals is not being met
- If a student meets their goals early

Other Forms of Support

Foss also offers several other forms of support for all students. They include:

Tutoring—offered several days a week after school in the Library, academically strong upper-classmen are there to help work with students who may struggle in a particular class or with a particular assignment.

Individual Afterschool Teacher Support—offered five days per week after school. Foss generates and maintains a list of faculty tutors available to help students at designated times. Teachers take turns offering support in several different subject areas.

Support Classes—offered at times during the regular school day. These are focused on English, or

Math/Science, and are provided to students who have not yet passed, or are not on track to pass, the state exams called the SBA (Smarter Balance Assessments). These classes include online courses for credit recovery called Bridge to College and are designed to help gather a portfolio of evidence to qualify a student to pass graduation requirements.

504 Plan—A student may have a 504 plan (so named because it falls under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act). This plan is issued for students with documented mental and physical disabilities that are affecting one or more life activities. A 504 plan lists accommodations needed in the general education setting to help the student access the learning on a level on par with their peers. Teachers are legally required to provide the accommodations listed on a student's 504 plan. Many students having 504 plans have taken one or more IB classes. A few have been Diploma candidates.

Other Support Staff—Foss has two full-time counselors, a career counselor and a school psychologist available to help students with their social, emotional, and academic needs. The nurse is here to assist students with health issues. A physical therapist, occupational therapist, and speech/language therapist are available to work with students who qualify for motor, speech, or language interventions.

Special Education and IB

The staff also tries to implement systematic safeguards for all students – such as breaking large projects and essays into smaller pieces with their own due dates, check-ins, and other appropriate pedagogical techniques that help students of all backgrounds and abilities succeed in the program. We do not bar access to diploma programme classes but do counsel students about their choices and options. In fact, we would like to see more special education students access the diploma programme, as appropriate for everyone.

We understand some of the accommodations that can be made for all students (such as translating dictionaries for Groups 3-6), others that can be made automatically if a student has documented diagnoses (such as naming the colors on a map for a color-blind student), and still others that require additional accommodations (as documented in the *Access and Inclusion Policy*) is a different process for temporary medical conditions that might interfere with internal or external assessments, for use in sudden or emergency cases. Additional information on this can be found in Articles 19-20 of the *General Regulations: Diploma Programme*. Students and parents/guardians are also supplied this text for reference.

Though teachers may be able to modify grading practices for other classwork according to students' IEPs and 504 plans, for DP internal and external assessments, they are graded according to the IB standard only, without modification. The only exception to this is if a student needs special circumstances for assessment, in which case, the instructional coach/coordinator at Foss is responsible for contacting Cardiff according to the process and timeline outlined in the *Assessment Procedures* and the *Access and Inclusion Policy*. The necessary documentation will be provided in such cases.

We understand that it is our responsibility within the school to adequately inform students of these policies, as well as counsel them about their course and examination choices. We will incur the cost of procuring a reader or scribe, or necessary additional equipment if needed. The guidelines to these features are found in the same document in the handbook.