

# 2016- 2017

## VMMS Inclusion Policy

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# Purpose, Mission, and Beliefs



## A. Purpose of Special Educational Needs Inclusion Policy

The Special Educational Needs/Inclusion Policy is a working document developed by the faculty, Academic Leadership Team, and administrators at Vista Magnet Middle School. Consistent with the standards and practices of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IB MYP), this document provides an overview of VMMS's beliefs and practices as they relate to special educational needs and inclusion. This document outlines the processes and philosophies implemented at Vista Magnet Middle School to ensure that:

ALL STUDENTS have access to the MYP curriculum and Common Core Standards, in order to fulfill the mission and vision of VMMS.

## B. Mission and Beliefs

*“Students will be literate, reflective and critical thinkers in all Global Contexts, who transfer knowledge and embrace diversity within a global society. Multiple opportunities for success through the implementation of an IB MYP aligned curriculum and utilizing differentiated instruction, technology, assessment and analysis of data will support academic achievement in a safe learning environment.”*

**VMMS believes in an equity model of education.** All students have the right to a high quality Free and Appropriate Public Education. Students with special educational needs are one group of many at our school that receive individualized learning.

**Our Vision for ALL students:**

We envision a school community where all members are respected, valued, and empowered to be socially responsible decision makers in the 21st Century.

**ENGAGE** - Students will engage in inquiry and critical thinking to make meaning of content that will remain with them not for 40 days, or 40 months, but 40 years.

**ACHIEVE** - As a result of innovative instructional practices, students will be able to be active participants in learning rather than recipients of knowledge.

**BELONG** - Students will make meaningful connections through their academic, social and personal goals.

**DESIGN** - Students will be able to create novel solutions to real world problems through the four elements of the design cycle: investigate, plan, create and evaluate.

# District Policies Regarding SEN



## MISSION STATEMENT

Our Special Education Staff is committed to providing specialized academic and behavioral support and services to students with exceptional needs in order to fully engage them in high quality learning environments that challenge and prepare them to be well-rounded, active members of a global society.

## COMMITMENTS

Our Special Education Staff has identified four key commitments that will ensure this mission is fulfilled:

1. **Responsiveness** – timely communication with students, parents, and staff
2. **Guidance** – program implementation in accordance with federal and state laws
3. **Support** – to create stimulating learning environments
4. **Resolution** – to ensure a free and appropriate public education for all students

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Vista Unified School District Special Education Department offers a continuum of specialized services to meet the unique and individualized needs of each student. We are committed to supporting each student's access to differentiated core instruction in the least restrictive

environment, while aligning each IEP (Individualized Education Program) to the Common Core State Standards.

It is important to note that special education is a service provided to students with exceptional needs. Special education is not a location or specific classroom. Special education is intended to provide a full range of services in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): the instructional setting that is most similar to the instructional setting attended by general education students. The LRE requires that students with disabilities are to be educated to the maximum extent possible with children who are not disabled.

# Inclusion



The inclusive learning environment at VMMS is caring, inviting, and sensitive to the diverse learning needs of its student population. The school's four pillars: Engage, Achieve, Belong, and Design, promote learning and educational access for all of the students and families in our school community. At Vista Magnet Middle School we have the belief that, with the appropriate level of support, most students with special educational needs can be successfully included, and benefit from being in a mainstream educational setting.

Equally important, each student is taught the IB learner profile. This group of 10 characteristics is used to focus and support academic, social, and emotional learning and enrichment. Students are encouraged to identify their strengths within the IB learner profile and to use those strengths to engage in academic discourse in general education classes in and around the school and its' community. Students use the IB learner profile to reflect upon their academic performance and community impact. Reflection is a key component of the culture at VMMS and as such, is a mainstay and central theme of most IB coursework.

# Students with Special Educational Needs



VMMS provides an inclusive academic model for ALL students. Accommodations stated in a student's IEP or 504<sup>1</sup> plan are implemented through a collaborative process in the general education classrooms.

## **Students identified as having Special Educational Needs:**

SLD (Specific Learning Disability)

Other Health Impairments (including ADHD)

ASD (Autism/Asperger's Syndrome)

Cerebral Palsy

Traumatic Brain Injury

Vision Impaired

Hearing Impaired

Orthopedic Impairment

Emotional Disturbance

Gifted and Talented

Students of Poverty

English Language Learners

Medical Conditions

Mental Health Conditions

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<sup>1</sup> 504 plans are for students with medical conditions that require specific accommodations

# Support Given and Services Provided



The students with Special Educational Needs listed above are supported by the following programs and services at VMMS:

- Enrichment classes
- Weekly grade updates
- AVID
- English Language Development
- Social groups
- Inclusion support in general education classes
- Study Skills
- Assistive Technology
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Counselors
- School Psychologist
- Social Work
- Behavior Support
- Social Emotional Academic Support

At VMMS, we strongly believe that all students experiencing academic and/or behavior difficulties may not have a disability or require special education services. In many cases, scaffolds and differentiation of instruction within the general education curriculum and classroom will address a student's individual learning needs. Student needs are continuously monitored and adjustments to lessons and assignments are made based upon student data and progress.



Students with Special Educational Needs are included in the general education environment to the extent possible in accordance with LRE (least restrictive environment). For some students this means a self-contained classroom (SEAS) and mainstreaming for a portion of the day when possible. For most students, the LRE involves full inclusion with specialized academic support and one class period of specialized academic support in a separate setting (Study Skills). Specific services are outlined in each student's Individualized Education Plan.

**Accommodations and interventions that are frequently utilized:**

- Assistive technology
- Small group instruction
- Sentence starters and paragraph frames
- Visual aids
- Chunked assignments
- Extended time
- Simplified directions
- ELL support
- Organizational support
- Learning labs/enrichment classes
- Reading groups
- Math 180
- Learning from mistakes
- Test retake opportunities
- Demonstrations
- Modeling
- Collaborative groups
- Extended learning opportunities
- Leadership roles

# Roles in Supporting SEN



## A. Special Education Teacher

1. provide instruction in social skills, organization, study skills, and learning strategies
2. provide instructional support in academic core classrooms
3. manage a caseload of *up to* 22 students
4. write and develop Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities in order to develop goals and identify progress on goals quarterly
5. ensure and support the implementation of accommodations, modifications, and supports outlined in each student's IEP
6. provide general education teachers with an IEP "at a glance" for each student
  - a. this is an aspect of the legal IEP document
  - b. SEN teachers can, *and should*, create a digital, summarized "IEP At A Glance" for communication purposes with the students' General Education teachers
7. Provide general education teachers with behavior supports for students with behavior goals and Behavior Intervention Plans on their IEPs.
8. communicate and collaborate with General Education teachers on a weekly basis
9. provide assessments for students referred for special education services and for triennial reviews of IEPs

## B. General Education/Subject Area Teachers

1. collaborate with the Special Education teachers to create scaffolds and accommodations to meet the needs of all students
2. communicate each student's goals, academic growth and behavior with the Special Education teacher
3. implement accommodations and modifications outlined in each students IEP
4. provide input for IEPs via an input form provided by the Special Education Teacher
5. attend IEP meetings
6. participate in Student Success Team (SST) meetings to develop strategies and interventions for students that are struggling academically, both with, and without IEPs
7. ensure and support the implementation of accommodations, modifications, and supports outlined in each student's IEP
8. provide instruction in social skills, organization, study skills, and learning strategies

## C. Instructional Aides

1. Provide support to students in all general education settings
2. provide support and instruction in small groups to support the achievement of students' goals and academic growth
3. assist the Special Education teacher with implementing curriculum and individual academic support during Study Skills classes
4. communicate student's academic progress with the Special Education teacher

#### D. Instructional Assistant - Behavioral Intervention

1. same functions as Instructional Aides with a few key additions:
  - a. implement behavior plans
  - b. use crisis prevention and de-escalation techniques when necessary (if certified)
  - c. collect behavioral data
  - d. work 1:1 with assigned students

#### E. School Psychologist

1. administers assessments for students referred for special education services and for triennial reviews of IEPs
2. provides counseling services outlined in IEPs

## SEN Practices

#### A. Student Success Teams

- Student Success Teams are a function of the general educational team for each student
- SST meetings are held when a teacher, parent, guardian or other stakeholder feels that the academic, speech/language acquisition, or behavioral/emotional needs of the student are not being met by the student's current circumstances
- Student Success Teams pay close attention to frequent absences, tardies, and behavioral/health issues to determine their root cause/s
- Team members meets to discuss interventions and supports to help the student succeed -- parent consent must be documented
- Team reconvenes 6-8 weeks after initial meeting to determine if interventions and supports have been successful

- Parent or guardian must be informed of their right to request a special education assessment at any time
- At this point, if parent requests an assessment the special education department must be notified immediately

#### B. Identification and Referral to SEN

- Referrals can be made by teachers, parents, agencies, appropriate professionals, and other stakeholders
- If, after the resources of general education have been considered and utilized, the SST suspects a disability exists which may require special education, the team makes a referral for evaluation.
- The SEN program must provide a written response to a request for assessment within 15 days
- The SEN specialist assumes case management responsibilities, completing the assessment plan and prior written notice and providing the parent with a [Notice of Procedural Safeguards](#).

#### C. Evaluation

- A plan describing the proposed assessments is delivered to the parents within 15 calendar days of receipt of the written referral for assessment.
- Once the assessment plan is received, the school has 60 days (excluding breaks longer than 5 days) to complete the assessment and hold an initial IEP meeting to determine eligibility.
- Special Education teacher must make a COPY of the Multi-Disciplinary report and share it with all assessors
- Each assessor must complete appropriate sections of the Multi-Disciplinary report
- If parents or guardians request a copy of the report, it must be sent home prior to the termination of the meeting
- School staff and stakeholders can meet for a staff meeting prior to the initial IEP meeting to discuss assessment results

# Communication with Families and the Community



At VMMS, we encourage open two-way communication between school members and the community. This includes, but is not limited to e-mails, phone calls, community information nights, open house nights, school tours, elementary presentations, and individual meetings. One purpose of this document is to communicate to all stakeholders in our IB community the program expectations of the inclusive environment created and maintained at VMMS. Further information regarding VMMS policies is available on school and district websites.

IEPs and 504 plans are reviewed and updated annually by the student's team. Team members include parents, the student, teachers, administrators, and service providers. Additional meetings may be requested by any team member when there is a concern regarding the student or the document in question needs to be amended.