

Poudre School District Inclusion “Learning Diversity” Policy

IB Partnership - Leshar MS, Lincoln MS, Poudre HS

I. Purpose

The SEN policy provides for our students and guides our practices:

- To maintain open access to our programmes for all students
- To meet the diverse educational needs of all students
- To define the roles and shared responsibility of each stakeholder
- To define the structures and systems needed to support all students

Inclusion

Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers. This can only be successfully achieved in a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support and problem solving. Inclusion is the learner profile in action, an outcome of dynamic learning communities. (from Diversity pg 3)

II. Philosophy

We (the collective students, staff, parents, and administrators of PSD IB Schools) as IB learners believe that all of our students are distinctive with needs and strengths that require attention to foster the attributes of the IB learner profile. Our programs provide multiple opportunities to meet the individual needs and varied learning styles of our students. We strive to serve the unique needs of all students, including those identified with special needs (special education and gifted and talented), so that each learner will meet or exceed their academic and non-academic potential. By striving to recognize and celebrate the diversity of our collective learning community, we support the development of internationally minded people.

III. National/State/District Requirements

A. What is Special Education? A Brief History

The special education programs of today are the direct result of key federal laws that have been passed in the last 40 years. In the 1960s, advocates for children with disabilities wanted the federal government to provide leadership and funding to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities. In 1966, Congress established the Bureau for Education of the Handicapped. A number of initiatives also earmarked small amounts of federal funds for serving children with disabilities. During this time parents pursued state laws that would require

local education agencies to offer special education services to students with disabilities. Although such laws were passed, many children with disabilities remained unserved or underserved by public schools. In 1975, Congress enacted Public Law 94-142. It required that all students with disabilities receive FAPE and provided a funding mechanism to help defray the costs of special education programs. Today this law is known as IDEA 2004 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

IDEA 2004 includes broad mandates for the provision of services to all children with disabilities. Although provisions have been added or amended in order to expand or improve the quality of services, the four purposes of IDEA have remained essentially the same:

- To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their particular needs.
- To ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected.
- To assist states and localities to provide for the education of all children with disabilities.
- To assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities.

B. The Special Education Process

1. Referral: When a parent or teacher is concerned about a student's progress a referral may be made to the school's Multi-Tiered System of Support Team (MTSS). This is not a special education process. The purpose of the MTSS is to provide a system of ongoing support to those who have concerns about a student. The MTSS team will gather available information, review records, and then try strategies which may be immediately beneficial to the student. A special education referral is initiated only after implementation of an action plan, frequent documentation has been collected by general education teachers and appropriate interventions have failed to show adequate progress.

A parent may make a direct referral for special education assessment at any time. When this occurs, the special education multidisciplinary team at the student's school of attendance must formally consider the referral. The team will consider the educational relevance and determine if there is sufficient supporting data to move forward with a formal special education evaluation. Assessment must cover all areas of concern. The team then considers the educational impact. The question to be answered is, "Is there a disability that is preventing the student from accessing the general education curriculum?"

2. **Evaluation or Assessment:** Individual evaluations are given after receiving parent written permission. The assessments are conducted by special education personnel and parents in the areas of health, communication, academic functioning, psychological, social, motor, and life- skills, using both formal and informal tests. The results of these assessments will help in determining eligibility for special education services and assist in educational planning. In addition, parents may choose to have an independent assessment done. If parents desire an independent evaluation, please call the Director of Special Education to determine the appropriate referral agencies, and the possibility of district payment.
3. **Initial Meeting:** An initial meeting is held to determine if a student is eligible for special education services. Parents, special education personnel, teachers, administrators, student (when appropriate), and other involved persons participate in a conference reviewing the assessment results and sharing pertinent information. If the student is found to be in need of special services, a program is developed. A parent's written permission is required to initiate special education services.

Individual Education Program (IEP) Every student with a disability receiving Special Education or related services must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is an education plan tailor-made to suit the student's individual needs to be successful in school. If the staffing team decides that a student is not eligible for services through special education, recommendations will be made to parents and teachers regarding various ways to help the student.

4. **Provision of Services:** The special education team will recommend the types of special education services that might be most appropriate to meet the educational needs of the student. Students are served in their home schools and participate in regular education classes whenever possible, this is also known as "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE). Other options are considered if a student needs a more specialized placement.
5. **Review:** The IEP is reviewed once a year or more often if necessary. At least once every three years, a Triennial IEP meeting is held to determine continued eligibility for special education. Assessments are part of the re-determination process.

Additionally, IB World Schools in PSD are required to abide by Colorado state laws in regard to the education of children identified as gifted and talented. Those specific practices are included in this document subsection "Extended Learning".

IB World Schools in Poudre School District are required to abide by United States federal and Colorado state laws pertaining to special education. These specific practices are outlined in the subsection of this document “Reasonable Support within the framework of identified needs”.

Differentiation

Differentiated instruction is utilized as an approach within the IB continuum of programs in PSD. Our schools recognize that there is a diversity of learners in every classroom and our learners are more successful when they are able to construct meaning based on their own readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles while ensuring that all students come to a similar grasp of a skill or idea. Teachers differentiate instruction with an individual student, within a small group, or with a whole class.

Teachers use five potential steps in the differentiation of instruction which include:

1. Identify and understand concepts, academic content and skills for students to learn
2. Determine what students already know and what they do not know
3. Decide which instructional methods and materials will most successfully address those needs
 - a. Vary Process - To allow all students to learn the same concepts, content, and skills with varied levels of “support, challenge, or complexity” (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 2) and capitalize on student strengths while addressing student needs.
 - b. Vary Materials - To encourage students to understand and transfer concepts, content, and skills
 - c. Additional differentiation practices including adjustments to Content, Process, Product and Classroom Environment are considered and utilized when appropriate.
4. Design ways to adequately assess student learning
 - a. Vary assessment - To give students options to demonstrate their learning (i.e. - the length of time a student has to complete a task or allow a written essay rather than an oral presentation, etc.)
5. If appropriate, PSD Counselors initiate and facilitate the 504 process in order to support students needing reasonable accommodations around instruction and assessment.

Adapted from:
Tomlinson, C. A. (2000, August). Differentiation of instruction in the elementary grades.

Affirming Identity and Building Self Esteem

Counseling

PSD counselors are partners with other educators, students, parents and the community in developing human potential through effective instruction and guidance.

In support of the Poudre School District Mission and Strategic Plan, school counselors will:

- Provide all students with the educational, career and interpersonal knowledge and skills necessary for a productive learning experience.
- Teach students to accept increased responsibility for their educational, occupational and vocational development.
- Acknowledge that every student is unique and important.
- Promote lifelong learning.
- Support and encourage mental health.
- Initiate and facilitate the 504 process for students identified as needing reasonable accommodations around instruction and assessment.

Valuing Prior Knowledge

In preparing for instruction, teachers consider:

- Engaging and meaningful activities that incorporate prior learning.
- A wide variety of learning activities that reflect the students' cultural diversity and multiple intelligences
- Graphic organizers to help students activate their prior knowledge and use it to facilitate learning
- Discussion in heterogeneous groups to elicit varied perspectives
- A variety of inquiry-based instruction models are used in all classes in order to facilitate the sharing of prior knowledge and engage students in their own learning (*cooperative learning, collaborative learning, PBL, guided inquiry, resource-based learning, constructivism, cognitive apprenticeship*)
- Involvement of community members and resources that reflect varied cultural expressions

Scaffolding

Learning is supported with practices that scaffold new concepts, knowledge, and skills. Articulation within the subject areas as well as Approaches to Learning skills (Yrs. 1-5) is an ongoing process.

Gifted and Talented

All gifted Poudre School District youth are identified by their strength areas and needs. PSD educational programming is designed and implemented to match their identified needs. Student progress and achievement is monitored through on-going dynamic assessment. Teachers of gifted students participate in professional development to increase knowledge, skills and understanding of gifted students and required instruction.

Gifted children are defined in Poudre School District as those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special provisions to meet their educational needs. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural populations.

Advanced Learning Plans

Advanced Learning Plans in Poudre School District are written for every student who meets the district criteria for gifted identification

Overview of Advanced Learning Plans in Poudre School District

Advanced Learning Plans focus on the four priorities for gifted programs in Poudre School District.

- Advanced Academic Performance and Achievement
- Independent Learning and Research
- Post-Secondary Readiness and Career Exploration
- Social and Emotional Needs/Affective Guidance

All goals for Advanced Learning Plans will address at least one of the above goal areas. Schools will support goal achievement by offering programming options and services targeted for gifted learner needs.

Advanced Learning Plan Communication:

- By September 15 - All parents of identified gifted learners should receive communication regarding the ALP process at the specific school site. This communication will describe the timeline for writing and implementing ALPs.
- By Winter Break - All parents of identified gifted learners will receive a final copy of the ALP.
- By May - All parents of gifted learners will receive communication regarding goal progress.

Parents are encouraged to contact the school's GT Site Coordinator with questions about the ALP process.

Educator, Parent, and Student Collaboration for ALPs:

PSD educators writing Advanced Learning Plans include the student in the goal-writing process. Parents can either be part of the goal-writing process or have an opportunity to provide feedback after the goal is written.

What is an ALP?

ECEA statute 22-20-103
Rule Section 12.01 (2)

“Advanced Learning Plan” or “ALP” means a written record of gifted and talented programming utilized with each gifted child and considered in educational planning and decision making.

The ALP is...

- A strength-based planning guide for curriculum, instruction, and assessment and social-emotional development.
- A record of results and programming options implemented for goal and school success.
- An accountability record showing short term and long term collaborative efforts.
- A dynamic, working document developed and reviewed through collaborative efforts of the teacher/s, parents and students.

Monitoring

- The areas selected as priorities for goals are monitored through ongoing assessment and parent-teacher conferences.

ALP Elements

- **Student Information** – strengths, interests, achievement data, affective needs
- **Collaborative Goal Setting** – parents, student, teacher, GT site coordinator or teacher
- **Services and Interventions** – differentiated instruction, affective guidance, content extensions, and structure for implementation
- **Data-driven decisions**
 1. Current student information and annual review will present data that guides decisions for acceleration and/or other programming emphasis.

2. Achievement targets are annual primary obligations.
3. Goals describe the specific and measurable programming emphasis for annual learning and growth.

Program Options

The following are possible services that can be documented in an Advanced Learning Plan. The ALP process should inform schools about which services will best meet the needs of the gifted learners at the school.

All programs focus on one or more of the following program priorities:

1. Advanced Academic Performance and Achievement
2. Independent Learning and Research
3. Post-Secondary Readiness and Career Exploration
4. Social Emotional Support/Affective Needs

Common Programming Options:

- **Accelerated Math:** PSD utilizes an accelerated math program in which 5th graders are assessed and potentially placed in 7th grade math as 6th graders. At this point, students continue to learn math skills at a higher grade-level than their age peers. The program is vertically aligned so that students can continue to grow in advanced math throughout high school.
- **Extended Learning Opportunities:** Lesher MS offers Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) time that is built into the schedule where students can receive differentiated support. In these situations, courses that are more complex or rigorous are offered to gifted learners either in an area of interest, or in a structure that allows gifted students to pursue an area of interest in a more in-depth manner.
- **GT Class:** At the middle school level, all students identified as “Gifted and Talented” take a GT Language Arts class in lieu of their regular English class.
- **Social and Emotional Interventions:** GT Discussion Groups, in which a counselor or trained teacher gathers GT students to discuss issues that affect their social/emotional well-being, are offered during lunches. Some of these issues might address peer relationships, academic and achievement expectations, perfectionism, post-secondary preparation, challenge, etc.
 - Lincoln and Lesher MS: Poudre School District follows the Colorado state mandate that all students designated as gifted and talented have an affective goal in addition to academic goals related to their area of giftedness. The affective goal relates to a student’s emotional/social well-being and is addressed through book study activities, discussion and lessons embedded within the GT class.

- **In-class Differentiation:** This service is offered by teachers within the classroom setting. Teachers pre-assess and adjust the curriculum as needed in order to create respectful tasks for advanced learners. Some strategies might include accelerated pace, choice in content, open-ended projects, more complexity and depth, etc. It is important to consider that differentiation should not result in MORE work for a gifted learner.
 - This includes: scaffolding, modeling, extending, modifying
 - Components of course that are considered when differentiating for all students:
 - Content
 - Process
 - Product (options within assessment tasks)
 - Classroom Environment
- **After school enrichment opportunities:** While these are excellent options for students to pursue an area of interest at deeper levels, these should not be the only services a school offers for advanced learners. They are, however, a great addition to the menu of options. Several examples from each school of the partnership are listed below:
 - Leshar MS: Science Olympiad, Yearbook, Math Counts, TSA, Lego Robotics, Chess Club, Science Bowl, National Junior Honor Society
 - Lincoln MS: Robotics and Odyssey of the Mind clubs. National Junior Honor Society and Lincoln Scholars Book Clubs meet by grade level during lunch.
 - Poudre HS: Robotics, Science Bowl, Science Olympiad, Class Councils, FCCLA, Drama Club, Environmentors (Colorado State University), Service Club, Project Unify and Unified Sports, Speech and Debate.
- Lincoln hosts a Gifted and Talented Spring Showcase every May, and Leshar hosts INQUIRY nights, which serve as an Open House event where students display and present their year-long independent projects.
- Poudre HS hosts an IB Showcase in April which serves as an opportunity for any student as PHS to display and share their work completed as part of the IB program. This includes the IB Art Show, all annual MYP Personal Projects and a variety of other students experiences including Performing Arts (theatre/music performances), service-as-action and CAS projects, student-led TOK discussions, robotics, and sharing of Extended Essay topics and ideas.

Reasonable Support within the framework of identified needs

Disability Categories

In the state of Colorado a child qualifies for special education services by meeting the criteria in one or more of the following disability categories. The disability must prevent the child from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education alone.

These include:

- SED (Significant Emotional Disability)
- SLD (Specific Learning Disability) - Reading, Writing, Math, Oral Expression, Listening Comprehension
- Speech Language Impairment
- Autism
- Vision
- Hearing
- Other Health Category (ADD, ADHD, Epilepsy, Diabetes, Heart Problems, etc.)
- Multiple Disabilities (Cognitive + Physical)

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Identification

A major change has occurred in the way special education multidisciplinary teams identify students with learning disabilities. In the past, when teams considered students to have a learning disability, the team needed to prove a discrepancy between the student's ability and achievement. This was accomplished by looking at the discrepancy between the student's scores on normed tests and typical scores. This has been labeled the "wait to fail" model because a student needed to fall significantly behind before special education services could be considered.

The discrepancy model is no longer used as sole method for identifying students with a learning disability. Current law states that after August 15, 2009, a team must consider a student's response to scientifically based interventions offered first by general education as an essential part of a full and individual evaluation for special education services. This aligns with a national and state school reform effort called Response to Intervention (RTI). A special

education referral is initiated only after implementation of an action plan and appropriate interventions have failed to show adequate progress.

There are 8 areas of focus that the special education team will look at when determining the specific needs of students. Those 8 areas are: Written Expression, Listening Comprehension, Math Calculation, Oral Expression, Math Problem solving, Reading Comprehension, Reading Fluency, and Basic Reading. If a student is not making adequate achievement or progress in any one of these areas despite instructional intervention a team will meet to determine the possibility of specific learning disability (SLD).

Continuum of Services

Students in Poudre School District who are determined to have a disability under current federal and state guidelines will receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This will include a continuum of services designed to meet each student's individual needs as defined in their IEP.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

FAPE means special education and related services that are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge. FAPE must meet all standards and guidelines set forth in current state and federal legislation. Services are provided in conformity with an individualized education program. [ECEA 2.19]

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general educational classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. [ECEA 2.29]

The Integrated Services Department will work to ensure that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Decisions about individualized programming will be driven by each student's unique needs. In many cases, the home school has or can arrange programming for students who have mild to moderated needs. Students with extensive needs may attend programs housed outside their home school.

Poudre School District has established the following supports and services based on the needs of individual students:

Multi-Categorical

Most students with mild to moderate needs can be served in their home school. These are students who spent the majority of their day being educated with their typical peers. Services vary based on individual student needs and are determined by parent input and a multidisciplinary team.

Services are designed to support and help students be successful and make progress in their academic setting. Independent living, vocational, and self-care skills can also be included depending on the needs of the student.

Extensive Needs -ILS (Integrated Learning Supports)

Some students may need more extensive services. The extensive programs serve students who need a variety of structure, support, and specialized education to be successful in school. Services include small and structured settings for academics, social skills, life skills, transition and close collaboration with community agencies and family. Students will receive specialized instruction and supports throughout their day to meet their unique needs.

Accommodations and Modifications

Two primary purposes of Special Education:

1. CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

“Curriculum” is the CONTENT, “WHAT” is taught.

For most children receiving special education support, CORE ACADEMIC curriculum based on state standards is used but with accommodations based on the child’s individual needs. For some children, an ALTERNATIVE curriculum is indicated to acquire more functional skills, such as what is available in the Integrated Learning Support (ILS) program, or ADDITIONAL curriculums may be taught, such as a social skills curriculum for children with social/behavioral challenges. The decision to adjust curriculum to be more relevant to a child’s abilities or needs is done on an individual basis through the IEP process.

2. INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS

“Instruction” is the “HOW” of teaching/measuring a student’s progress.

In typical general education classes, instruction is delivered primarily in larger groups, with some small groupings for certain activities, cooperative learning peer groups, etc. A student’s progress is tracked through tests developed at elementary sites, through district Level Tests, the state assessment and/or by using nationally developed tests in certain grades. Work samples, observation, and data collection are also used.

Special educators and related service providers consider unique instructional accommodations/strategies a child may require, such as small group instruction, frequent

practice and repetition, use of different materials, reduction of sensory information, etc. They also consider accommodations needed to measure a student's progress. These may include accommodations in timing/scheduling, setting, format/equipment, presentation of directions, or recording/response accommodations. For example, a student with difficulty reading may need to take a test orally; another student may need additional time or may be exempted from large-class testing. The decision to use a particular accommodation with a student is made on an individual basis through the IEP process.

Support and Training for Staff

The PHS Integrated Services and ELA Team are planning and implementing regular trainings and information sessions for all PSD IB staff to explore HOW to accommodate in the classroom (Unit Planning - Differentiation). These sessions will begin at this summer's MYP Summer Camp (May 31-June3) and will continue through next year as part of our in-school professional development and district professional development days.

Support for Parents

School and Community Resources

We are fortunate to live in a community that values and serves people with special needs. The resources provided here are in no way exhaustive, but will hopefully further community connections.

Any questions or concerns related to integrated services in PSD can be directed to Heidi Graber, PSD Parent Liaison for Integrated Services.

Communication, Implementation, and Evaluation of Policy

Initial Draft: 2012-13

Implementation: 2013-2014

Review: Yearly

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