

Access and Inclusion Policy

Antietam Elementary School, 2020-2021



Philosophy

At Antietam, our mission is to “create an atmosphere where our diverse learners will be critical, compassionate, and reflective thinkers focused on personal growth in a global community.” We believe that we will achieve more and be successful by working together.” We also believe in meeting the diverse needs of all students daily. These 3 statements from our school’s vision relate directly to the 3 officially identified sub-groups that are addressed in this policy: Special Education students, ESOL students, and Gifted and Talented students. An “inclusive education,” according to IB, “refer(s) to a broad understanding that embraces the diversity of learners and all minority groups.” Three specific identified groups that have their own set of rules, regulations and strategies to meet their needs are Special Education students, English Language Learners (ELLs) and gifted students. This policy details how we currently provide an inclusive education for these students.

Practice

Special Education

According to the document titled Virginia Department of Education K-12 Inclusive Practices Guide published in 2019, “Inclusive education, as required in federal and state regulations, encompasses practices that concentrate on creating meaningful access to instruction for all students across academic, social, and physical environments.” The following information regarding special education comes directly from the Virginia Department of Education Website: “The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) guarantees a free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities. The steps in the special education process include: 1. Identification and referral, 2. Evaluation, 3. Determination of eligibility, 4. Development of an individualized education program (IEP) and determination of services and Reevaluation.”

There are timelines schools must follow for each step of the process. Timelines help to prevent any delay. Procedural safeguards, which are rights given to the parents of a child with a disability and the child upon reaching the age of majority (age 18), ensure that the child is provided a free appropriate public education according to the federal and state rules. The services and placement of students with disabilities who need special education, are developed through an IEP, which is the responsibility of local public school divisions. The Federal and State definition of special education and specially designed instruction are:

“Special education” means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent(s), to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in a classroom, in the home, in hospitals, in institutions, and in other settings and instruction in physical education. The term includes each of the following if it meets the requirements of the definition of special education: (§ 22.1-213 of the *Code of Virginia*; 34 CFR 300.39)

1. Speech-language pathology services or any other related service, if the service is considered special education rather than a related service under state standards;
2. Vocational education; and
3. Travel training.

"Specially designed instruction" means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction: (34 CFR 300.39(b)(3))

1. To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and
2. To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards that apply to all children within the jurisdiction of the local educational agency." (Virginia Department of Education Website)"

In our building we have a variety of specialists that service our students with special needs, depending upon how they are identified using the federal guidelines for operational criteria. Our specialists include teachers of students with learning disabilities (LD), teachers of students with autism, teachers of students with intellectual disabilities, speech and language therapists, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, and physical therapists. We also have access to autism specialists, behavior specialists, and other specialists to consult with teachers within the county. There is a recommended teacher-to-student ratio that our administration tries to follow, as well as a recommendation for how and when, and how many paraprofessionals are employed. Special Education teachers continue with professional development requirements that align with Virginia's state requirements for teacher recertification. All educators on the special education team are provided special education updates monthly in a meeting held by the special education area supervisor at the school. There are guidelines provided by the state regarding assessment participation and testing accommodations. Each teacher that works with students is given a yearly budget of \$200 to spend on classroom resources as needed. The state gives a specific amount of money to the school for each special education student, "per pupil funding," to fund the school's special education program. The school has one handicapped-accessible bathroom in the main hallway and a handicapped-accessible front entrance. All self-contained classrooms have student bathrooms, and some are wheelchair accessible. We use the Response to Intervention (RtI) model as the starting point to identify and serve students who need additional academic or behavioral support to make satisfactory progress towards meeting grade level expectations. Classroom interventions based on recommendations provided by the school Intervention Team are implemented and data collected weekly to determine student progress. If a student does not show growth after several interventions have been tried, s/he is referred for a special education evaluation. An evaluation always includes cognitive and academic testing. Testing for speech, behavior and physical/motor skills are also conducted if determined to be appropriate. Students who qualify for special education services receive support from the school special education resource staff.

Students' academic deficits are addressed with research-based curriculum in reading, math and writing using a self-contained, pull-out, and/or inclusion model based upon individual

student needs. The IEP team convenes annually to assess student progress and create new goals as needed. The IEP team consists of all stakeholders in the students' educational process. Partnership with parents plays a key role in creating a successful learning experience for all students. The school recognizes that parents hold key information and have knowledge and experience to contribute to the shared view of a child's needs and the best ways of supporting them. Parents of children with special educational needs are considered partners and supported as active and valued role in their student's education.

English Language Learners (referred to in our school district as ESOL)

The federal law ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) provides through Title III, Part A: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students, that English language learners will have access to a FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education). Locally, our county follows the recommendations outlined by the 2015 "Dear Colleague Letter" from the Department of Justice. Prince William County Schools has developed a detailed grid which outlines how all identified English Language Learners, or ESOL students, will receive specialty education services. Teachers certified in ESOL provide ELD services (English Language Development) to our ESOL students. In addition, general education teachers provide "Sheltered Instruction" services to this population. New teachers to Prince William County Schools are to complete 60 hours of EPLP professional development within the first 3 years of employment. This includes 45 hours of professional development and 15 hours of implemented practice that is tracked at the school level.

Our school currently has 5 certified ESOL teachers to provide English Language Development services to our students. Certified ESOL teachers are expected to take annual professional development related to how they service their students and training regarding teaching special populations, specifically dually-identified students which are students that qualify as a special education student and as an ESOL student. Each ESOL teacher is given a yearly budget in which to purchase materials to assist in this endeavor. All the purchased ESOL resources are kept in the ESOL offices or classrooms and are available for all teachers in the school to use. An inventory of these supplies is kept on the One Drive at school. In addition, the school provides subscriptions to virtual resources such as Reading A-Z EL edition and Brain Pop for ELs to help meet their needs. The ESOL lead provides updates on new information regarding the ESOL program in PWCS to the ESOL team and other teachers at the school. Updates are provided to principals at county principal meetings.

ESOL students are identified first at school registration through the Home Language Survey and qualify for services based on initial testing at Central Registration using the WIDA MODEL. ESOL students go through yearly testing using different WIDA ACCESS 2.0 tests to determine eligibility for ESOL services. The results of the test determine the upcoming school year service and delivery plan which includes who, how, where, how many minutes and when English Language Development services will be provided to individual students. This is called the Service and Delivery Plan. The Service and Delivery Plans are developed by ESOL teachers following the service grid developed by county ESOL specialists, which follow the legal and recommended guidelines. These plans are monitored at the school level by the principal and lead ESOL teacher and at the county by the educators at the ESOL department. This data is shared with interested parties at the state level. Parents are notified of testing results by written communication from the ESOL department. Alternate Access testing which is provided to dually identified students is discussed at student special

education meetings. WIDA test results are also discussed at all intervention team meetings regarding ESOL students that are having learning challenges in any area. The front office handles all communication regarding confidential records regarding outgoing and incoming students. Outgoing students being those going to other schools in the county, out of county, out of state or country and those transitioning to middle school. Incoming students are those registering at our school that may be transferring from other schools in the county, out of county, out of state or country and those transitioning from preschool. Students that have registered at a county preschool that are identified as English language Learners by the Home Language Survey need to be referred for testing before entering kindergarten, as that is when students are eligible to begin receiving services.

At the beginning of each school year, the ESOL teacher meets with the classroom general education teacher that the student will spend most of their time with. A Service and Delivery Plan regarding Sheltered Instruction language services is developed for each individual student following guidelines provided by the county. These include a menu of researched based strategies, resources and accommodations at different levels, beginner, intermediate and advanced. ESOL student delivery options include monitoring, co-teaching, pull-out or push-in services. Testing accommodations are also developed for the students based on those allowed and recommended by the Virginia Department of Education. Student language goals (Can-Do Goals) are created for each student following the WIDA Can Do language goals framework. The student's Service and Delivery Plan, Can Do language goals, testing accommodations and testing history is all stored virtually in our county data base "The Hub." ESOL student academic progress is also monitored by ESOL teachers, and when students are not progressing satisfactorily, a plan of action is created to foster success for the student. Quarterly progress reports are also stored virtually in "The Hub." Student files are also kept in a locked file room. Only the teachers of the student, office staff and administration have access to these student records. ESOL student records are the File 6 and kept in a blue folder with all the other student files.

Gifted Students

The state of Virginia has mandated grouping size and service time requirements for students that have been identified through testing as "gifted." Our school district states that students should be grouped in classrooms in clusters of 4-6 gifted students and provided instruction from the certified gifted teacher in a pull-out delivery model. All classroom teachers are required (countywide) to have 18 hours of gifted instruction in order to meet the needs of gifted learners in the classroom. This is expected within the first 5 years of employment. IB Category 1 training counts for 12 of these credit hours. The other 6 is required through county classes or college work. The gifted teacher has her own classroom where s/he provides pull-out services. Students in the gifted classes have multiple ways of showing what they know, and they have student choice for both what and how they learn. They can learn new languages in the gifted room; they have time to research and learn on their own, and they can communicate in their own language, if they desire. As students move through the program over the years, they are given multiple ways to show what they know, so learning needs are often self-regulated, and sometimes self-initiated in the older grades. Students have multiple assignment options; they learn to request different ways to show what they know. Students have time to work on individual activities and interests in their own way. We have access to one full-time gifted teacher. Our gifted teacher serves as a resource for teachers utilizing extensions for all students and providing push-in lessons so all teachers can

extend learning for students in their classrooms. The Gifted program is officially funded based on student identification as of September 30 of each year as a per-pupil ratio. At Antietam, the gifted teacher typically gets the \$200 everyone else does for classroom resources. Additional minimal resources to support the program are sometimes provided upon teacher request by the school.

Students, depending on their grade, are given a combination of the following tests: STAR math, CogAt, NNAT (Nagliari), QRI, DRA, K-BIT (Kauffman Brief Intelligence Test) and the results of these tests are used in the process of official identification of gifted students. The gifted teacher is allowed to give the CogAT, NNAT, and K-BIT. The gifted teacher provides testing for K-BIT and any CogAT or NNAT that was missed in 3rd grade, or given again with the gifted teacher in 4th or 5th. The gifted teacher informs the parents of test results. Additionally, gifted identification is shared by the gifted teacher, and sometimes the office of Gifted, if there is an appeal.

The gifted teacher communicates with parents using Seesaw messages, Twitter, and her webpage (which also has her Twitter feed, showing what is done almost every day). Gifted students have a yellow folder as part of their registration records that moves from one school to the next through the school office level. These gifted records are locked in the file room. Only the office staff, administration, gifted teacher and classroom teacher have access to these files. The gifted teacher also has a database of the gifted students and their test results and gifted status. She keeps this is on a flash drive which stays in a locked classroom.

Principles of Good Practice

The four principles of good practice identified by the IB as promoting equal access to the curriculum for all learners are: affirming identity and building self-esteem, valuing prior knowledge, scaffolding and extending learning. These principles are addressed for these 3 groups in the following ways:

Special Education

- affirming identity and building self-esteem: Teachers help students identify the strengths they have and how they can use those strengths to foster growth in other areas. It is important to teachers that their students know how much we believe in them, so that they can learn to believe in themselves. Teachers tell the students that they are important and valued in every lesson. Verbal praise is used in addition to tangible reward systems to reinforce positive behaviors (academic and non-academic) to help with their self-esteem. The general ed teachers and special education teachers also try to provide set opportunities for students to show success in whole group, such as selecting a certain question we know that student will be able to answer, providing a pre-correction, etc.
- valuing prior knowledge: Students share their life experiences. Prior knowledge relating to the different subject areas is also discussed. All experiences and knowledge the students come with are discovered and teachers help students build on that.
- scaffolding: Strategies are taught that build on individual student strengths so they can try to compensate for some of their weaknesses, such as multi-sensory reading techniques, mnemonics, visual aids, and graphic organizers. Sentence stems,

sentence starters, fill in the blanks, reduced number of answer choices for multiple choice assessments (build them up to the full number of choices) are also used. These supports are faded out as needed on a case by case basis.

- extending learning: Opportunities are provided for individual students to continue to practice and generalize skills they have learned while peers are still working on remediation or learning the skill in general.

ESOL

- affirming identity and building self-esteem: ESOL students share their own experiences, discuss their family experiences, talk about what they know of their heritage country and language, valuing differences and building a growth mindset, positive reinforcement and showcasing achievements and opportunities to model their learning for others
- valuing prior knowledge: ESOL students are allowed opportunities to make personal connections with texts and share their connections and culture with the class, seeking input from students about their background knowledge
- scaffolding: Graphic organizers, charts, and images are used to help ESOL students visualize and organize ideas. Students are allowed choice in assignments. A gradual release model for lesson planning along with backwards planning is used. Building of content vocabulary and reading and writing supports that aid in the acquisition of vocabulary in the content areas are also used.
- extending learning: Differentiating based on not only by language proficiency level, but on reading level and interest as well. Opportunities and suggestions for further activities and research opportunities are provided.

Gifted

- affirming identity and building self-esteem: Gifted students are grouped together in the classrooms and given additional time outside of the classroom to help foster their identity as gifted learners. The activities completed in the gifted classroom help students see they are different from others, but also that differences should be embraced and nurtured.
- valuing prior knowledge: Gifted students often have the chance to share what they know both in the general education classroom and the gifted classroom. Activities within the gifted classroom often allow students to move at a quicker pace, thereby acknowledging that prior knowledge is valued as they move forward. As students move into 4th and 5th grade, they are able to share and apply their prior knowledge to individual centers and learning opportunities.
- Scaffolding: Gifted students are not all the same; one student may struggle in math, but not in reading. Scaffolds are given to those students who need them in order to show their skill in a particular area. Peers or adults can help with scaffolding within any activity.
- extending learning: Students in the gifted classroom spend more time on learning new skills that may or may not apply to their current classroom objectives. Activities in the gifted classroom are often new skills, or skills which move deeper into grade level topics.

Policy Review

This policy will be shared at the beginning of every year with leadership and then with the staff in an in-person staff meeting the week prior to school starting. It will also be shared with PAC (principal's advisory committee) at the first in-person meeting. Prior to these meetings, the policies will be made available to these stakeholders virtually and will include a Google form as a survey where they can make comments to be considered to adjust the policy. After approval from these 3 groups, these policies will be available to the community on our school webpage under the IB tab. They will also be stored in the One Drive for the coordinator to keep track of important school IB documents and be make available to staff in the IB folder in the faculty Teams group in a file titled IB.

Note: This policy was composed by the IB coordinator with collaboration with the gifted teacher, special education team, and ESOL team.

Resources and references used in the creation of this policy: "The IB Guide to Inclusive Education: A Resource for Whole School Development," "Virginia Department of Education K-12 Inclusive Practices Guide and Resources" from the Virginia Department of Education Website regarding these groups.