**What We Believe**

Philosophy:

We believe that all learners have unique needs to consider when helping them to meet/ exceed their academic and non-academic potential. To provide access to the IB PYP Programme at E. Rivers, we apply approaches and support systems that address the individual needs and varied learning styles of students, including those identified with special needs (e.g., special education, gifted and talented and English Language Learners). By recognizing the diversity of our collective learning community, we support the development of internationally minded people.

Practices:

At E. Rivers students with disabilities (SWDs), English Language Learners (ELLs), and students identified as gifted and talented are educated in general education environments with appropriate support and services. Identified students receive support from teachers with specialized degrees and/or certifications in these areas through a co-teaching model or through a pull-out program for part of their instructional day as determined by their individual instructional plans. We build positive learning communities in which a culture of collaboration encourages and supports problem solving for all students. The district provides a continuum of placements where appropriate instruction is available to students with disabilities requiring special education and related services in accordance to federal and state laws.

**Inclusion**

Philosophy:

We believe in teaching and supporting all learners (e.g., special education, gifted and talented, and English Language Learners) by helping them meet or exceed their academic and non-academic potential. We include all students by recognizing the importance of meeting the individual needs and learning styles of all students in our diverse learning community.

Practices:

At E. Rivers, all students (SWDs, ELLs, and the gifted and talented) receive instruction in the general education environment with the maximum amount of support necessary for success. Teachers are presented with training opportunities to expand their breadth of knowledge in instructional models for maximum student achievement and classroom management for heterogeneous populations. Teachers collaboratively engage with grade level and vertical teams in designing, implementing, and evaluating instructional practices in professional learning communities. Within these cooperative teams, instruction is developed with the following in mind: learning styles, cognitive abilities, language proficiency, accommodations, and specially designed instruction.

**Differentiation**

Philosophy:

We believe that all students should receive instruction that enables them to succeed within the range of their approaches to learning, abilities and interests. Differentiation is seen as the process of identifying, with each learner, the most effective strategies for achieving agreed goals.

Practices:

At E. Rivers, all students receive differentiated instruction, which includes, but is not limited to, dynamic groupings within classrooms, small group instruction, and tiered lessons. Teachers use pre-assessments and formative assessments to discover students’ strengths and areas to focus targeted instruction on. Teachers implement open-ended learning engagements, and provision of materials (such as leveled reading materials, enrichment activities, and choice menus) designed to address students’ level of readiness and to appeal to their individual learning styles or interest.

**Assessment**

Philosophy:

We assess students in a variety of ways. Assessment is ongoing and provides choices based on student’s needs.

Data from a variety of assessments are used to identify the differentiated needs or special services for individual students.

Practices:

Some examples of assessments, for students with identified needs, include but are not limited to: differentiated formative and summative assessments, differentiated choice boards, usage of rubrics, student set goals, and self-reflection.

Students with individualized plans receive appropriate accommodations on their classroom and standardized assessments.

The school administers several state and district assessments, including GA Milestones, STAR Reading and Math, Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) for reading, ACCESS for ELL’s, and GKIDS for kindergarten students.

We annually provide a formal report to parents about their child’s development of the IB Learner Profile Attributes.

**Affirming Identity and Building Self-Esteem**

Philosophy:

At E. Rivers, we believe in the importance of affirming identity and building self-esteem. We facilitate this development because we know an affirmed identity and healthy self-esteem influences motivation and positive decision making. Our students will have the creativity of resilience and the confidence to see setbacks as opportunities. Our students are global citizens and leaders. As such, when their own identities are affirmed, they will be able to appreciate the identities of others. When our students have high self-esteem, they are more willing to cooperate and collaborate with others as well.

Practices:

We provide a variety of opportunities to affirm and support the diverse needs of students:

* Base their learning on real-life experiences
* Celebrate learner profile strengths and target growth for profile weaknesses
* Set learning goals based on their reflections, goal setting, and expectations
* Use their learning strategies and build on their strengths
* Expand on multiple intelligences to enhance understanding
* Build confidence in their work and self
* Express their points of view and understanding
* Understand what their needs are and how to improve
* Use their prior knowledge to build on and guide the inquiry process.

**Valuing Prior Knowledge**

Philosophy:

At E Rivers we value the experiences and prior knowledge of our students. We believe in utilizing prior knowledge as a catalyst to engage students in a deep, meaningful, and lasting way with state standards and units of inquiry.

Practices:

At E. Rivers, student background and prior knowledge are valued. A variety of approaches are used to provide a holistic view of students’ knowledge and experiences. Teachers engage students at the beginning of lessons by previewing skills, texts, vocabulary. Small group conferencing gives students opportunities to share levels of understanding. This also allows teachers an opportunity to provide feedback. Pre assessments provide teachers with data on skills and standards previously mastered. Students are given opportunities to integrate prior knowledge with new material.

**Scaffolding**

Philosophy:

At E. Rivers, teachers believe in building enduring understanding in students through scaffolding and gradual release. Our teachers teach with the understanding that they are charged with carefully building student knowledge one layer at a time. Teachers believe that while scaffolding may lengthen the amount of time to completely teach a lesson, the end product will be of greater quality and the experience more rewarding for all.

Practices:

At E. Rivers, teachers are skilled in scaffolding instruction for every learner in their class and grade. Teachers scaffold instruction in order to get students to a certain level. Teachers scaffold instruction in various ways, including by not limited to: using visual aids and graphic organizers to support product development and organizing and representing ideas; pre-teaching vocabulary and concepts; group conversations; examination of prior knowledge; and peer and teacher modeling.

**Extended Learning**

Philosophy:

At E. Rivers, teachers believe in extending learning for all students in order to help them comprehend the evolving complexity of their academic texts and tasks. High expectations along with opportunities for differentiated engagement of cognitively rich learner-centered experiences are key to extending learning for all students, including students with special needs.

Practices:

At E. Rivers, Learning is extended for all students at E. Rivers through additional opportunities and resources. Students with disabilities as well as our English Language Learners extend their learning by accessing increasingly sophisticated texts using assistive technology and read aloud software. These resources allow our students to extend their academic language and creates additional student centered learning activities. Additional software to assist students with writing is also utilized.