

Deerwood Academy Elementary School Special Education Needs Policy

Beliefs:

At Deerwood Academy, we believe that scholars with disabilities deserve a quality education that provides meaningful academic, social, emotional learning through inclusive instruction. In our inclusive classrooms, we create authentic learning experiences by captivating scholars with rigorous activities geared towards their individual learning styles. General education teachers and special education teachers work collaboratively to provide supportive strategies and services that help scholars with disabilities (special education and gifted and talented learners) achieve academic success.

Identification:

Identifying scholars who may have special needs usually begins with the classroom teacher. Teachers identify scholars' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers address these weaknesses with various research-based strategies while monitoring their progress. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, all scholars with special needs receive a free, appropriate public education and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) which is specifically written by qualified school personnel to meet each scholar's needs. Each IEP is reviewed at least annually to ensure the scholars' needs are being met. The Department of Special Education offers a broad continuum of services. Following a comprehensive assessment that may include a psychological evaluation, educational testing, speech-language assessment, audiological testing and other assessments, a scholar may be eligible to receive services in one or more of the following categories. . . .

- Autism
- Deaf blind
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH)
- Emotional/Behavioral Disorders
- Intellectual Disabilities (Mild, Moderate, Severe/Profound)
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Significant Developmental Delay
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech-Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visually Impairment & Blindness
- Preschool Special Education
- Related Services

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Classroom Instruction:

At Deerwood Academy, the majority of our special education population is serviced in the general education classroom for their entire school day. These students receive support from special education teachers and general education teachers through a co-teaching model. We also have a Moderately Intellectually Disabled MOID classroom that provides a challenging learning environment that employs a variety of instructional techniques appropriate to the maturity, interests, and needs of the scholars. These scholars are mainstreamed into general education classrooms where they receive a portion of their daily instruction with their peers. At Deerwood academy we service gifted scholars in first through fifth grades using in the cluster model. In the cluster model, identified gifted scholars are placed as a group (recommended 6-8 students) into an otherwise heterogeneous classroom, rather than being dispersed among all of the rooms/courses at that grade level. In kindergarten we implement the collaborative delivery model. In a collaborative model classroom, a maximum of eight identified gifted scholars are placed as a group into an otherwise heterogeneous classroom. Direct instruction is provided by the scholars' regular classroom teacher who collaborates with a designated gifted teacher. There must be substantial, regularly scheduled collaborative planning between the regular classroom teacher and the gifted lead teacher.

In our inclusive classrooms we use several co teaching models.

Co- Teaching Models

1. One Teach, One Observe. One of the advantages in co-teaching is that more detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process can occur. With this approach, for example, co-teachers can decide in advance what types of specific observational information to gather during instruction and can agree on a system for gathering the data. Afterward, the teachers should analyze the information together.
2. One Teach, One Assist. In a second approach to co-teaching, one person would keep primary responsibility for teaching while the other professional circulated through the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed.
3. Parallel Teaching. On occasion, student learning would be greatly facilitated if they just had more supervision by the teacher or more opportunity to respond. In parallel teaching, the teachers are both covering the same information, but they divide the class into two groups and teach simultaneously.
4. Station Teaching. In this co-teaching approach, teachers divide content and students. Each teacher then teaches the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction for the other group. If appropriate, a third station could give students an opportunity to work independently.

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5. Alternative Teaching: In most class groups, occasions arise in which several students need specialized attention. In alternative teaching, one teacher takes responsibility for the large group while the other works with a smaller group.
6. Team Teaching: In team teaching, both teachers are delivering the same instruction at the same time. Some teachers refer to this as having one brain in two bodies. Others call it tag team teaching. Most co-teachers consider this approach the most complex but satisfying way to co-teach, but the approach that is most dependent on teachers' styles.

SST Tiered Intervention and Support:

At Deerwood Academy we follow the Georgia's four-tiered Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions to provide appropriate and effective Response to Intervention services, which incorporates universal screening, targeted interventions, and a team approach to decision-making and the development and implementation of services. A Student Support Team (SST) meets regularly to monitor the student's progress and provide additional strategies for the teacher to implement in the classroom. The team consists of at least the classroom teacher(s), school counselor and the student's parent/guardian. If the student does not progress, they may decide to begin a battery of comprehensive assessments which may include a psychological evaluation, educational testing, and speech-language assessment to name a few. It is with all of this data that the team in conjunction with the parent/guardian, will determine if the student qualifies for a special needs program and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to help ensure the student's academic success

Tiers I and II Interventions are facilitated in the general education environment by grade level and department teams. Documentation from each tier is utilized to make decisions regarding interventions and movement between tiers.

Tier III Interventions and services are facilitated by the Student Support Team (SST). The SST Chairperson ensures the process is followed and team decisions are made according to the outcome of data, indicating student progress.

Tier IV Interventions and services are facilitated through specialized programs or instructional delivery models such as the Program for Exceptional Children, English Language Learners, or Gifted Instruction.

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Supporting Special Education Scholars:

Department of Special Education Philosophy

Vision

The vision for the Atlanta Public School's Department of Special Education is that our diverse learners meet and exceed state and national standards and seize opportunities for continuing their educational, social, and career development in a global environment.

Mission

The Mission of the Atlanta Public Schools' Department of Special Education is to assure student achievement by providing a continuum of appropriate, specialized services and supports.

School Psychological Services

School Psychologists provide a wide variety of services, including evaluating children and assisting teachers and administrators by providing information about students' intellectual, academic, social and emotional needs. Additional services include counseling and crisis intervention. Training currently requires approximately three years of intensive graduate work and field experience in addition to meeting state certification requirements.

School Psychologists perform other duties that serve school personnel and parents, as well as the students. They are available for consultation or training and provide information about issues such as learning disabilities, behavior management, discipline, emotional problems, and test interpretation.

School Psychologists Work With Students to:

- Provide counseling, instruction, and mentoring for those struggling with social, emotional, and behavioral problems
- Increase achievement by assessing barriers to learning and determining the best instructional strategies to improve learning
- Promote wellness and resilience by reinforcing communication and social skills, problem solving, anger management, self-regulation, self-determination, and optimism
- Enhance understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures and backgrounds

School Psychologists Work With Students and Their Families to:

- Identify and address learning and behavior problems that interfere with school success
- Evaluate eligibility for special education services (within a multidisciplinary team)
- Support students' social, emotional, and behavioral health
- Teach parenting skills and enhance home-school collaboration
- Make referrals and help coordinate community support services

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School Psychologists Work With Teachers to:

- Identify and resolve academic barriers to learning
- Design and implement student progress monitoring systems
- Design and implement academic and behavioral interventions
- Support effective individualized instruction
- Create positive classroom environments
- Motivate all students to engage in learning

School Psychologists Work With Administrators to:

- Collect and analyze data related to school improvement, student outcomes, and accountability requirements
- Implement school-wide prevention programs that help maintain positive school climates conducive to learning
- Promote school policies and practices that ensure the safety of all students by reducing school violence, bullying, and harassment
- Respond to crises by providing leadership, direct services, and coordination with needed community services
- Design, implement, and garner support for comprehensive school mental health programming

School Psychologists Work With Community Providers to:

- Coordinate the delivery of services to students and their families in and outside of school
- Help students transition to and from school and community learning environments, such as residential treatment or juvenile justice programs

Supporting Gifted Scholars:

The Office of Gifted and Talented Education Philosophy

Vision

The Office of Gifted and Talented Education in the Atlanta Public School System will be the architects of globally competitive, critical, and creative thinkers of the 21st century. We will create programming designed to ensure the continuous development of advanced learners throughout their educational career. Gifted and Talented education will provide appropriate differentiated instruction for gifted learners which will enable them to reach their maximum potential.

Mission

The Office of Gifted and Talented Education will provide learning environments which foster personal and social responsibility, multi-cultural competence, and technical communication skills for citizenship in the global environment of the 21st Century. We will

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design and deliver rigorous and relevant curriculum to students in grades K-12 to address their academic and intellectual needs. Our mission is not limited to those identified as gifted and talented, rather it encompasses all learners in the Atlanta Public School System as we create opportunities that expose all learners to gifted pedagogy.

Gifted Delivery Model

At Deerwood academy we service gifted students in first through fifth grades using in the cluster model. In the cluster model, identified gifted students are placed as a group (recommended 6-8 students) into an otherwise heterogeneous classroom, rather than being dispersed among all of the rooms/courses at that grade level. In kindergarten we implement the collaborative delivery model. In a collaborative model classroom, a maximum of eight identified gifted students are placed as a group into an otherwise heterogeneous classroom. Direct instruction is provided by the students' regular classroom teacher who collaborates with a designated gifted teacher. There must be substantial, regularly scheduled collaborative planning between the regular classroom teacher and the gifted teacher.

Gifted and Talented Education Standards

Advanced Communication Skills Standard: Learners will engage in diverse and authentic learning experiences which will allow them to develop and apply innovative oral, written, visual, and nonverbal communication skills across disciplines.

Advanced Research Skills Standard: Learners will gather, decipher, and determine credibility of information from a variety of sources and integrate information thorough analysis of content.

Creative Thinking & Problem Solving Standard: Learners will insightfully evaluate a variety of problems and arrive at innovative conclusions

Higher Order and Critical Thinking Skills Standard: Learners will analytically critique a system or set of complex ideas, utilizing logic and reasoning skills in novel ways, to create and/or modify knowledge.

Enrichment activities are used to expand and deepen student learning. They are often interactive and are an authentic representation of the learners' ability. Enrichment activities enhance a student's educational experience by bringing new concepts to light or by employing old concepts in new ways and are fun for the student. They also support and extend core curriculum standards. Enrichment activities allow participants to engage in real world experiences and applications. Below is a brief synopsis of the enrichment programs that the Atlanta Public School System offers its students:

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Section 504:

Congress prohibited discrimination against persons with disabilities in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, in a segment most often referred to simply as 'Section 504.' This was a broadly worded prohibition that covers both children and adults. It applies to programs that receive any federal financial assistance.

Section 504 prohibits discrimination against individuals whose physical or mental impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities, including: caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, and learning.

- Under Section 504, schools must afford students with disabilities equal opportunity.
- Many students, who fall within the Section 504 category, are medically involved, and the disability is temporary in nature.
- Section 504 accommodations are delivered and monitored through the Student Support Team.

Assessment:

All students with special needs at Deerwood Academy participate in classroom and statewide assessments with modifications as specified on their IEP's.

Professional Development:

The faculty and staff at Deerwood Academy continue to pursue professional development with Special Education. We will utilize our Special Education teachers as experts and catalysts for diversity.

Communicating the Policy

The Special Education Needs Policy is regularly communicated to all staff members through collaborative dialog during professional learning. The policy is shared with parents and community stakeholders during Parent Academy breakout sessions. Teachers are responsible to communicate this policy to students and parents. At the beginning of each new school year the policy will be shared with faculty during professional learning days and utilized as a working document.

Reviewing the Policy

The school reviewed the Special Education Needs Policy during the self-study process. The policy will formally be reviewed every four years with all stakeholders.

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References

Deerwood Academy Special Education Needs Policy 2013

IB Special Education Documents

Atlanta Public Schools Department of Special Education,
<http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/page/180>

Georgia Department of Education's Gifted Program,
<http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Gifted-Education.aspx>

<http://www.ctserc.org/index.php/co-teaching/item/184-six-approaches-to-co-teaching>