



Roberts Elementary Special Educational Needs Policy

The Roberts Elementary community believes that all students have the right to a free and appropriate education where all children learn together. We believe that children of all ages should learn and grow in environments that resemble the environments they will eventually work in as adults. We believe an inclusive society is the most effective means of combating discrimination and that inclusive education is an ongoing process concerned with breaking down barriers to learning. Only inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and to build friendship, respect and understanding. We believe all students should be mainstreamed into our broad, balanced IBYP curriculum, with supports given for learning differences. Since all children learn at different rates and in different ways, it is necessary for learning to be differentiated in order to ensure student success.

Not all students are alike. Based on this knowledge, differentiated instruction is based on the premise that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to the individual and diverse students in the classroom. Differentiating instruction is recognizing students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, interests; and reacting responsively. Differentiated instruction is a process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is, and assisting in the learning process. Roberts teachers differentiate on a daily basis based on students' various levels of language proficiency, gifted and talented abilities, and learning differences.

Principles of Practice with Special Needs students

Within our Special Needs practices are the four principles of good practice identified by the International Baccalaureate that promote equal access for all learners across the curriculum. We recognize that these principles are based on elements of good practice which are essential to the development of the whole child.

Affirming Identity and Building Self Esteem

During class time, students are encouraged to explore the various attributes of the Learner Profile and strive to identify with one or more of them. Students who exhibit particular strengths in a Learner Profile attribute are recognized by their class and the community as a whole.

Valuing Prior Knowledge

We recognize that it cannot be assumed that those learners who have diverse learning needs will necessarily all share the same previous learning and background knowledge. If new information is to

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be understood, it must be linked to prior knowledge. All teachers on our campus activate prior knowledge through the use of either formal pre-assessment or questioning strategies. In addition, our teachers engage in a process of regular collaborative planning in order to consider and develop the strategies necessary for activating and building up background knowledge when planning units of study.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding provides a concrete context for understanding. Our teachers use strategies, such as visual aids, demonstrations, and collaborative groups, to foster learners' increasing independence.

Extended Learning

Students receive multisensory instruction that is explicit, direct, cumulative, intensive, and focused on the structure of language. Multisensory learning involves the simultaneous use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile pathways to enhance memory and learning of written language.

Gifted and Talented Students

We believe that gifted and talented (GT) students should be provided opportunities to enrich their learning with strategies for mastering knowledge and skills at rates faster or earlier than the norm. These learning activities are not designed to increase students' workload, but are based upon performing complex and open-ended tasks. We encourage students to show unique, fresh ideas through inspired learning within a heterogeneous classroom. Upon setting and understanding high expectations, students demonstrate strong leadership and problem solving skills by embodying the Learner Profile and demonstrating the IB Attitudes.

We believe it is best practice to differentiate for exceptional learners. Our goal is to engage these learners in a way that challenges their thinking and raises their expectations for their own learning. We want to recognize and develop their unique talents. Students can explore content within a discipline to include analyzing from the concrete to the abstract, familiar to the unfamiliar, known to the unknown. Students may explore the chosen discipline by going beyond facts and concepts into generalizations, principles, theories, and laws, and by investigating the layers of experience within a discipline through details, patterns, trends, unanswered questions, and/or ethical considerations.

We offer flexible pacing, allowing the students to learn at the pace and level appropriate for their abilities and skills. Enrichment options are actively facilitated by teachers, administrators, and counselors. Opportunities are provided for students to pursue areas of interest in selected disciplines through guided and independent research, such as the Independent Investigation Method (IIM). Students are given opportunities to create and design open-ended products on self-selected topics. Flexible grouping patterns and independent investigations are implemented in the foundational curricula areas. In the classroom, GT students are given opportunities to reflect on their experience using information gathered during the learning process (self-reflections). We assess students with ongoing formative and summative evaluation strategies based on observations, quantitative, and qualitative data.

All kindergarten and 5th grade students are universally screened for gifted and talented identification. Interested parents may also request that their 1st through 4th grade students be assessed for identification, once per year. The assessments used for screening and selecting students include Stanford 10 Achievement test, Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, report card grades, and teacher recommendations.

Progress for gifted and talented learners is communicated with parents through email, newsletters, conferences, conversations, assessments, Parent Information Night, progress reports, report cards, and weekly communication folders. The products and achievements of our students are shared with the community via the International Festival, musical programs, GT Expositions, 5th grade Exhibition, and hallway displays.

Students Requiring Intervention

Roberts Elementary has developed an Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) to assess, identify and provide academic and behavioral support for students and to provide ideas for accommodations or differentiation for classroom teachers. The IAT monitors student progress so that additional evaluations and referrals can be made, if necessary, to Section 504 or Special Education as federally mandated per the *No Child Left Behind Act 2001* and *Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA)*.

We believe that interventions should be provided to help students fulfill their potential as confident, independent, knowledgeable individuals. Intervention should be in a safe, trusting environment and create skilled and skillful members of the community. Intervention should prepare all students to live and participate in a global society respecting and valuing all cultures and traditions.

The federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* and the *Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA)* direct schools to focus on helping all children learn by addressing problems early on. Both laws stress the importance of providing high quality, scientifically-based instruction and interventions, and holding schools accountable for the progress of all students in terms of meeting grade level standards. The goal of this process is to identify children who are at-risk for not meeting grade-level standards and to intervene early.

The intervention approach includes a multi-leveled system of interventions in which each level (or tier) represents an increasingly intense level of services. Interventions that are provided to a child will be continually adjusted based on progress monitoring until the child is progressing adequately. Children, who do not respond to the initial interventions within a reasonable period of time, as suggested by research, are referred for more intensive interventions.

The Roberts intervention process begins with teachers regularly assessing student progress (see *Roberts Elementary Assessment Policy* for additional information). Data regarding a students' reading and mathematical understanding will be used to determine if instructional interventions are needed.

Teachers will:

- assess all learners three times annually (beginning, middle, and end of the year) in Reading and Math
- assess students' independent reading ability using assessments such as DRA, TPRI, Fountas & Pinnell
- assess students' mastery of mathematical concepts using assessments such as district benchmarks and Everyday Math

- use additional data from Stanford 10 Achievement Test and STAAR

If a teacher determines that a student requires instructional interventions, the following steps will be followed:

1. Teacher refers struggling student to the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT)
2. Teacher completes the *Student Concerns Profile* and *Parent Conference Form*, gathers work samples and submits all documentation to the IAT Chair Person (CP).
3. Teacher makes an appointment to attend the IAT meeting to discuss student concerns.
4. IAT provides support, recommendations, interventions, and assigns the student to an intervention tier (1, 2, 3).
5. Targeted interventions are provided through small group or individual instruction.
6. Student progress is reassessed every 4-6 weeks and IAT interventions are reviewed. At that time, new recommendations may be generated, the original plan may be continued, the student may be exited from IAT or may be referred to Section 504 or Special Education for additional evaluation and services.
7. At the beginning of each school year, the CP meets with every grade level team and shares information on all students currently receiving IAT interventions.
8. IAT decisions will be communicated to the parent at the initial teacher conference while explaining the IAT process and the child's interventions. Parents will be updated after every meeting regarding their child.

Special Education Students

Roberts Elementary offers a variety of services to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Depending on the child's individual needs, his least restrictive environment can be as restrictive as a self-contained special education classroom or as nonrestrictive as a general education classroom for the entire school day. A continuum of services ensures that we are able to make our students successful. Roberts Elementary provides the following continuum of special education services:

Consult Services

Special Education and Related Services teachers provide consult services for students who may qualify for special education services but by parent request receive no services during the school day. By providing these services, special education and related services teachers can monitor progress in the general education classroom and make recommendations based on the child's needs.

Inclusion/Co-teach

Many students in special education have their needs met by the general education system. This program requires significantly increased resources in regular education (such as special educators working in the classroom), changes in typical classroom instruction (often more multi-sensory approaches are used), and training for the Inclusion team.

Resource

Students receiving resource services have demonstrated a significant academic lag in one or more areas and are taught compensatory skills based on the student's IEP. These students spend less than 50% of the day in special education classes and are mainstreamed into the general classroom for the remainder of the school day.

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