

2021-2023
Sunset Ridge Middle School and the Connecticut IB Academy (CIBA)
Access and Inclusion Policy

Philosophy

Sunset Ridge Middle School (SR) and the Connecticut IB Academy (CIBA) fully subscribe to the International Baccalaureate Organization's belief in the importance of differences and diversity. We believe that all students enrolled in the IB Programmes at SR and CIBA should "receive meaningful and equitable access to the curriculum" (IBO, 2010). We believe that all students should be empowered through opportunities to learn from multiple perspectives and with collaborative and differentiated approaches to teaching and learning. SR and CIBA focus on creating and maintaining a learning community that values and recognizes the individual strengths and experiences of each member, while simultaneously challenging and holding all students to high expectations. SR/CIBA believe that "inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers" (IBO, 2011). We believe that all students should be included in "decisions about their learning, [having] the opportunity to develop the attributes of the learner profile and to understand themselves as learners" (IBO, 2013). SR and CIBA adhere to all local, state, and federal regulations regarding students with special needs.

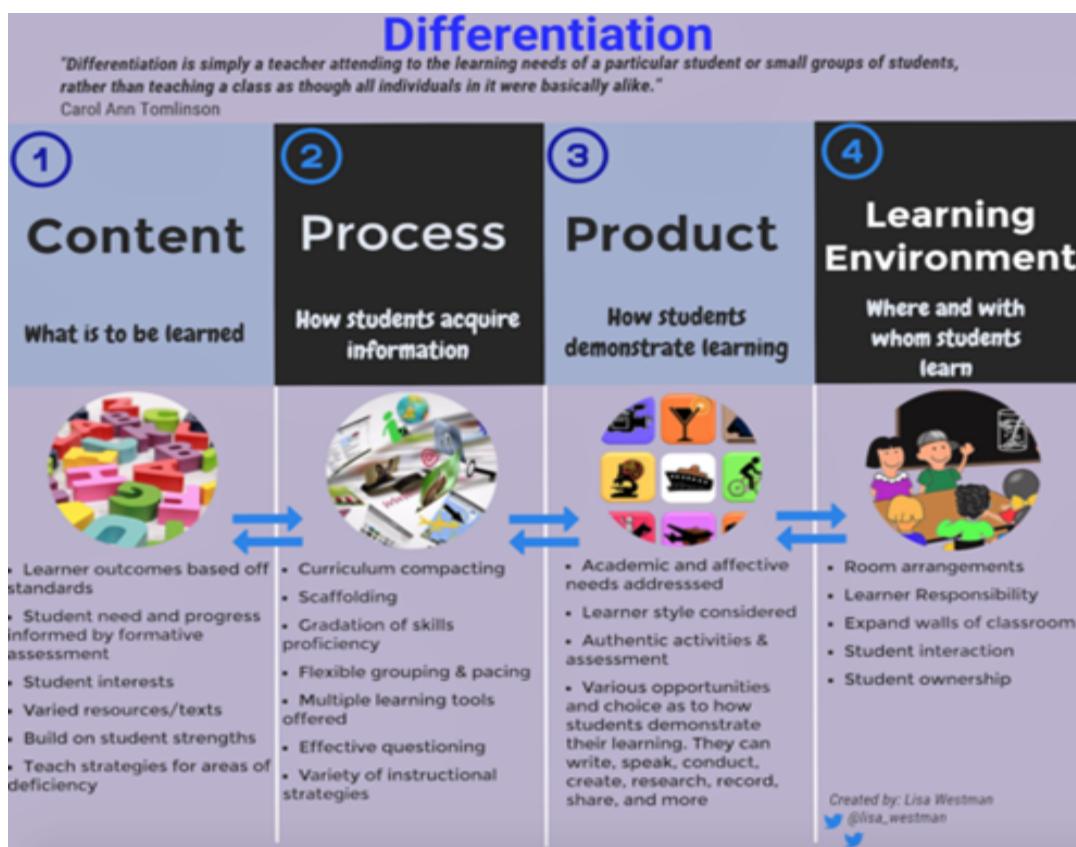
Admissions

The Middle Years Programme partnership offered at SR and CIBA accepts students through school choice and Greater Hartford Regional School Choice Office's (RSCO) lottery/placement process, respectively. There are no academic prerequisites in either process, as we value and believe in the potential of all students to attain success as measured by IBO and national and state standards. At CIBA the lottery is regulated, administered, and supervised by the Connecticut State Department of Education's RSCO in compliance with the Sheff v. O'Neill settlement and stipulated order.

Differentiation

It is the expectation that teachers differentiate daily for all students. Differentiation can take place through content, process, product, and learning environment (see chart below). Teachers should identify and be aware of each student's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and strive to create assignments and assessments that keep each student at an appropriate level of rigor as they progress through the learning sequences. Focusing on both the IB Learner Profile and Approaches to Learning (communication skills, social skills, research skills, self-management skills and thinking skills) creates an additional way to differentiate for students. In being reflective and open-minded, students closely consider their own learning and experiences while understanding others. This allows students to better understand their abilities and use this knowledge to advocate for themselves and their individual needs. By encouraging students to

be inquirers and thinkers, those students who learn in a different way have more opportunity to showcase their abilities while following their natural curiosity. The IB concept of encouraging risk-taking behaviors as well as caring and principled thought allows students of varied abilities to express themselves in an open and accepting forum without negative judgment or fear of humiliation. In developing young communicators who express their ideas in a variety of modes, the special education student's individual differences become less obvious, or possibly celebrated as the idea of "difference" shifts to a positive light. These students become knowledgeable as they are provided the opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across multiple disciplines. By applying IB principles and practices, the teachers have a multitude of avenues to best educate all students so they reach their educational potential.



Scaffolding

Breaking down content and skills into manageable parts is a common way to assist all students, including those who have special needs, to be successful. Teachers add temporary supports at the beginning of a challenging learning activity so that it is possible for the student to succeed. These supports, such as graphic organizers; partial outlines; templates and/or structured groups, are gradually removed to allow students to take full responsibility for their own learning. Utilizing the gradual release of responsibility model allows students to move toward mastery of skills, strategies, and standards.

Scientifically Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)

In alignment with East Hartford Public Schools, SR and CIBA use Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) also known as Response to Intervention (RTI) nationally. This three-tiered framework provides intervention and educational support for all students at increasing levels of intensity based on their individual needs. The goal is early intervention to foster success for all students in Tier I.

SR/CIBA utilize the district's SRBI pyramid (see Appendix A) and incorporate IB principles and practices to aid teachers in assisting students who require specialized instruction. This pyramid is divided into the following three Tiers (for both academic and behavior):

- **Tier I** includes approaches to teaching and learning and differentiation for all students;
- **Tier II** includes targeted group interventions in addition to Tier I. Students receiving Tier II interventions have a collaboratively-written action plan including a Smart, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely (SMART) goal, progress monitoring, and documentation of the outcome.
- **Tier III** includes additional, intensive and individualized interventions for students whose level II plans do not achieve the intended results. Students receiving Tier III interventions also have a collaboratively-written action plan including a SMART goal, progress monitoring, and documentation of the outcome.

NOTE: All three tiers are part of a comprehensive educational system. Therefore, the tiers should not be viewed as categorical placements or as “gates” to special education supports and services. Referral for special education evaluation can be considered at any point in the process if data demonstrates continued lack of response to interventions.

SR/CIBA teachers have dedicated time to discuss appropriate interventions for students who require Tier II or Tier III support, ranging from once a week to once a month. Those students who are not responding to intervention, with adequate documentation, are referred to a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) to determine if there is sufficient data present that suggests a student may be a student with a disability (for CIBA students the student's sending district will be contacted). If the PPT determines there is sufficient data, they determine what types of assessments, evaluations or data are necessary to determine eligibility for special education. Written consent from the parent or guardian must be obtained in order to conduct an evaluation. Pending the results of the evaluation, the PPT determines if the student is eligible for special education services. The student receives support either from within the East Hartford Public Schools (if they are East Hartford residents) or from their sending districts for CIBA (as required by law). Students who come to SR/CIBA with IEPs receive the support mandated by the IEP. At SR/CIBA, all teachers support and encourage students of all abilities to solve problems creatively and to become internationally minded learners.

SRBI does not replace the special education process. If at any time parents believe their child has a disability that is affecting his/her/their learning, they have a right to request a PPT to determine if an evaluation is required. In addition to the information gathered through SRBI, other forms of evaluation must occur to determine if a child is eligible for special education and

parent's written consent is required for the evaluation. The PPT determines whether or not a student qualifies for special education services and what kind of specialized instruction they require.

Tier I

SR/CIBA uses SRBI/MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) of intervention, whereby the first step is high quality instruction for **all** students. Teachers focus upon appropriately scaffolding instruction and providing authentic opportunities for differentiation to make the concepts and essential skills accessible to every student in Tier I. Through the IB Unit Development Cycle, teachers intentionally plan instruction that is both horizontally and vertically aligned while considering students' needs. Differentiation, regular formative assessments to monitor student understanding, criterion-based assessments to isolate the skills wherein students need further support and practice, and the incorporation of varied and leveled materials, activities, and assessments are all included in our IB units. SR/CIBA teachers believe in identifying and meeting students at their level, and then providing the necessary tools and strategies they need to progress academically. Formative and summative assessments vary in terms of verbal and nonverbal; written, oral, and kinesthetic; and individual and collaborative. By providing students with choices on how they want to represent their learning and honoring multiple modalities, all students are able to reach high levels of learning.

Tier II and Tier III Interventions

There are Tier II and Tier III interventions in place for students at SR for both Math and Reading. Instructional tutors are used for literacy and math interventions. A trained tutor provides individual or small group interventions as well as classroom support. The intervention program is carefully chosen for each student based on universal screenings and diagnostic assessments. Students meet in small groups with a trained instructional tutor to strengthen their strategies and improve their literacy and math skills to progress through the MYP.

For Tier II and Tier III students SR/CIBA offer interventions including online programs such as IXL for mathematics and LEXIA program which are monitored by the teacher or specialist. CIBA has a full-time literacy tutor to whom students are referred. CIBA also has a peer tutoring program along with teachers offering support through after school tutoring.

School Services Provided

SR and CIBA, in alignment with East Hartford Public Schools, strive to provide services to support student development in all areas. All students have access to the following services as needed:

- Guidance program
- School psychologist
- Certified social workers
- Behavior managers
- Student support center

- Nursing services
- Dental Clinic
- Intercommunity (CIBA only)

Inclusion

Our schools follow an inclusion model to provide support for students with 504 plans and identified students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students with special education services are provided access to the curriculum in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The LRE ranges from the regular, comprehensive classroom where classroom teachers and specialists follow an inclusive approach and collaborate regularly, to support in a resource room for a portion of the day. Teachers and specialists follow the 504 plan/IEP and provide any special services, modifications, accommodations, and/or materials students require to access the curriculum and achieve their highest potential. For students demonstrating academic talents in a particular area, teachers address those needs through classroom differentiation. Regardless of the type of need, teachers collect and analyze data, monitor progress, and set and update goals with the students including families in the process. Please refer to the assessment policy for more specific information regarding this process.

At our schools, we adhere to federal guidelines governing the education of students with disabilities, The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). It is designed to protect the rights of students by ensuring that everyone receives a Free, Appropriate Public Education regardless of ability level. Furthermore, IDEA strives not only to grant equal access to students with disabilities, but also to provide additional special education services and procedural safeguards. This includes the provision, coordination, and monitoring of services as required in the student's IEP. Through our structures and systems, the value of inclusion for all students is promoted and communicated.

Accommodations, Modifications, and Services

Examples of accommodations or modifications that are utilized are the following:

- Preferential seating
- Leveled texts
- Modified assignments
- Small group instruction
- Scribe or reader
- Extended time
- Behavioral modifications
- Alternate testing environment
- FM system for hearing impaired
- Prioritized assignments
- Daily assignment list

This is not an exhaustive list. Please note that the accommodations and modifications listed above are utilized after careful consideration of a particular student's needs through

assessment data. Modifications are only used for students with an IEP given that a modification changes the content.

The following are examples of services provided for students who receive special education services as their IEP specifies:

- Speech and language services
- Nursing
- Counseling services
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Transportation

Assessment

Assessment for all students is described in the assessment policy. During a PPT, members of the team will determine what assessments and screening tools are necessary for an individual student. These assessments and screening tools will be acquired by the district as needed. For students that receive special education services, the testing accommodations and modifications in their IEPs are adhered to when they take an assessment. Of note, 504 plans also may contain testing accommodations.

Conclusion

At SR and CIBA, we present a broad, balanced, and academically-demanding and rigorous curriculum for all of our students, while recognizing individual learning styles and providing accommodations for our diverse population. This helps individual students affirm their identity within the learner profile, set personal goals in the “Approaches to Learning,” and become successful learners. We focus on developing critical thinking and reflective skills, research skills, and the development of independent learning, while incorporating intercultural and global understanding. Through recognizing the individual strengths and needs of our students, teachers at SR and CIBA work to ensure the success of all students, and guide all students towards becoming global leaders.

Communicating the Policy

The policy is regularly communicated to all staff, families, and stakeholders. It has been posted on both SR's and the CIBA websites. All members of the school community are invited to provide input regarding this policy, and its implementation, at any time to school IB coordinators and/or administration. Contributions from stakeholders are welcome and discussed through the policy review process.

Policy Steering Committee

The policy steering committee is composed of a variety of stakeholders and representatives from both campuses. The steering committee is responsible for overseeing the procedures

needed to develop the philosophy and the overall language policy. To this end, they communicate effectively and regularly with the community and then gather and present the views of the community to inform the work.

Reviewing the Policy

The MYP coordinator at SR and IB coordinator at CIBA will ensure that the policy is reviewed and revised every two years to reflect the current needs of the school population and to ensure consistency with IB expectations. Best practices in language teaching and learning will be implemented based on the results of the research findings during the revision process. All staff at SR and CIBA are involved in the development and revision of the policy and agree to uphold it. The access and inclusion policy is also in alignment with the East Hartford Public Schools' Board of Education policy 5145.4, 5145.4a, and 5145.4b. All staff are responsible to ensure that the policy is a working document, that it is followed and reflected upon. The leadership of SR and CIBA recognize that staff will need specialized skills and knowledge in the areas of inclusion, differentiation, and intervention in order to implement this policy and the procedures that are outlined.

Appendix A: SRBI Triangle

