



# Hephzibah Elementary School

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Principal

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Assistant Principal

## **Inclusion Policy**

### **Statement of Belief**

The **mission** of Hephzibah Elementary School is to develop caring, compassionate, and responsible students who are life-long learners, committed to seeking knowledge and understanding of other people and the world around them. As a public school in Hephzibah, Georgia, we accept all students regardless of their race, sex, gender, or exceptionality in an inclusive environment. We acknowledge that students come with a variety of academic and physical needs. By recognizing the diversity of our collective learning community, we support the development of internationally minded people.

### **Practice**

Richmond County Schools provide services to students with disabilities in a continuum of educational environment from resource class placement to programs in specialized facilities. Students receive evaluations in all suspected areas of disability. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) determines the type and degree of required services. Students and parents are provided due process procedural safeguards as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

The special education process begins with a referral submitted by the parent and/or educator. The student is evaluated by the school psychologist. A meeting will then be scheduled to determine the student's eligibility for services. Meetings include a representative from the Local Educational Agency (LEA), Special Education Department, Administration, the classroom teacher, and the parents. Re-evaluation occurs as needed and annually.

As a Georgia public school, we uphold the legal practices of Individual Education Plans (IEP's), Early Intervention Program (EIP), Gifted Education Plans (GEP's), English Language Learners (ELL) and Individual 504 plans. Students receive education in their least restrictive environment which is primarily the general education classroom. Identified students receive support from teachers with specialized certifications through co-teaching/collaboration or pullout program models.

There is access to certified special education resource teachers, a gifted resource teacher, and a speech therapist as needed. Screening and testing of potential special needs students are addressed at the district level.

Resource services are individualized to meet the unique needs of students who have disabilities. These services are provided according to IEP's, GEP's and 504 plans. Compliance with and updating of these plans are the responsibility of the resource teacher, school administrators, counselors and parents. Overall, students are in various tiers due to their needs, regardless of the level of instruction, all students participate wholly in the IB PYP Program at Hephzibah Elementary School.

### **Differentiation**

Hephzibah Elementary School utilizes grouping within classrooms, tiered lessons, use of pre-assessments and formative assessments to discover and evaluate students' strengths and areas of focused targeted instruction. All students are provided with instruction and support to help them succeed.

## **Stakeholders**

The following personnel are fundamental to the implementation of the Inclusion Policy:

- Board of Education members
- Administration (Principal, Assistant Principal, MTSS Facilitator, Instructional Specialist, PYP Coordinator, Counselor)
- Special Education, Early Intervention, and Gifted Teachers
- School Psychologist
- Guidance Counselor
- General Education Teachers
- Specials Teachers (Art, Physical Education, Spanish, Music, and Media)
- Parents and Guardians
- Students
- Community Members (Hephzibah Baptist Church, Hephzibah United Methodist Church, KJ's Market, Jefferson Electric, Hephzibah Police Department)

## **Definition of Inclusion**

Hephzibah Elementary School supports the IB's program and philosophy by allowing access for all students, especially those with special education needs, 504 plans, and EIPs, to reap benefits of the IB PYP Program. Collaborative planning and differentiated instruction is used to meet students' diverse learning needs and styles. Those in the pullout setting receive full access to the IB PYP program as well.

## **The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Committee**

The MTSS Committee process is a state-mandated and school-based intervention process. The MTSS Committee serves as the basis of Tiers II and III – Response to Intervention (RTI) services. The purpose of the MTSS Committee is to provide support to students, parents, and teachers in order to improve student achievement. The MTSS Committee is led by the MTSS Facilitator and is composed of teachers, resource personnel, administration, parents, students, and community members (when necessary). The team works to address learning and/or behavior difficulties by students. This includes students who are medically challenged, display behavioral challenges or who show little growth in academic progress. Wrap-around services, mental health, and our school Social Worker may also provide support for students who might not need an RTI plan.

## **Response to Intervention (RTI)**

Hephzibah Elementary School follows Georgia's three-tiered Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions to provide appropriate and effective response to intervention, which incorporates universal screening, targeted interventions, and a team approach to the creation, development and implementation of services. Tier I interventions take place in the general education setting by grade level teams. Tier II and III interventions are implemented by both general education and EIP teachers in math and literacy. Documentation from each tier is utilized regarding the types of interventions used and the movement of students between tiers. Tier II and III interventions and services are facilitated by the MTSS Committee. The MTSS Facilitator ensures that the program is implemented with fidelity and decisions are made according to data and indicators of student progress.

## **Special Education Categories of Eligibility**

Eligible students are determined to have one or more of the following disabilities:

- Autism
- Deafblind
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Emotional and Behavioral Disorder
- Intellectual Disabilities

- Mild Intellectually students demonstrate a potential for personal, social, and emotional growth leading to independent, productive living.
  - Moderately Intellectually students demonstrate an intellectual ability of approximately one-third to one-half that of the average of their age peers.
  - Severely and Profoundly Intellectually students demonstrate an intellectual capacity two-thirds below the average of their age peers.
- Orthopedic Impairment
  - Other Health Impairment
  - Significant Developmental Delay
  - Specific Learning Disability
  - Speech/Language Impairment
  - Traumatic Brain Injury
  - Visually Impairment

There are additional services which are required in order for identified students with disabilities to benefit from their special education program. These services include occupational therapy, physical therapy, adapted physical education, adaptive music, speech, language services, and transportation.

### **Special Needs Preschool Program**

This program serves three and four-year-old students with disabilities. Evaluation of a child's communication, cognitive, motor, self-help, and social-behavioral skills are provided by a team of psychologists, educators, and therapists. Preschoolers with disabilities may be served through a home-based or facility-based model. Children can begin receiving services on their third birthday.

### **Community Based Instruction**

This program is designed to supplement classroom activities and to provide opportunities and experiences which occur in the actual environment where skills will ultimately be performed. Training in the community ensures that students practice activities under conditions characteristic of the real world.

### **English Language Learners (ELL)**

Due to the diversity of our student population, ELL services are provided to increase English language proficiency of all English learners (ELs). Students receive services that are facilitated both in and out of the classroom. The facilitator has completed IB Category 1 training to ensure the fidelity of the PYP program is carried out.

### **Early Intervention Program (EIP)**

The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is designed for students in grades K-5 who are at risk of not reaching or maintaining grade level performance and provides intervention strategies and service for qualifying students to remediate foundational skills needed for academic success. The EIP program provides additional instructional support and resources to help students who are performing below grade level. The goal is to help students obtain the necessary academic skills.

### **Section 504**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in a section referred to as 504 and covers both children and adults. Section 504 applies to programs that receive federal funding and prohibits any form of discrimination against individuals whose physical or mental impairment substantially limits 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 provide students with disabilities equal opportunity for success. At times, students who have temporary medical conditions or temporary disabilities will receive 504 accommodations. Accommodations are delivered and monitored through the Student Support Team (SST).

## **Gifted and Talented**

Hephzibah Elementary School has gifted certified teachers that work with the general education classroom teachers to ensure that students are receiving support and services in the classroom as well as in a pull-out environment. In an effort to ensure our Gifted Program meets the PYP program standards and practices, the gifted certified teachers are required to attend an IB Category 1 Training and work with the PYP Coordinator to ensure that the fidelity of the IB program is carried through to the gifted classroom.

Gifted testing occurs in the Spring. The following tests are used to determine gifted qualifications:

- ITBS and/or i-Ready – measures achievement
- CoGAT – measures mental ability
- Torrance Test of Creative Thinking – measures creative ability

In addition to the above tests, the Gifted Program also offers the Talent Development Program. This program is designed for high-achieving students who are close to passing the gifted testing. These students are pulled out of the classroom to further develop creativity and motivation in order to get them ready for the upcoming year of testing.

## **Confidentiality**

Hephzibah Elementary School's confidentiality of student records reflects the policy guidelines in the Parental Rights for Special Education. Students' educational records are private. Parents are only permitted to have copies of their child's records. School employees who are involved with a student may see the student's records and do not require parental permission. However, school personnel are obligated to keep a student's records confidential. No one else is permitted to see student records without consent from the parent.

## **Ongoing Review of the Inclusion Policy**

The Pedagogical Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring the successful implementation and evolution of the Inclusion Policy. Communication of the policy will extend to parents, teachers, and local stakeholders in the community.

## **Resources**

Copeland Inclusion Policy <https://www.rcboe.org/Page/75928>

International Baccalaureate Inclusion Policy

Georgia Department of Education Special Education Guidelines <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/default.aspx>

Georgia Department of Education Gifted Guidelines  
<https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Gifted-Education.aspx>

Richmond County RTI Guidelines <https://www.rcboe.org/Page/11200>

Georgia Department of Education EIP Guidelines <https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Early-Intervention-Program.aspx>

Richmond County ELL Guidelines <https://www.rcboe.org/Page/47419>