



## AEACS Inclusion Policy

### Purpose

Albert Einstein Academies Charter School (AEACS) is committed to fostering a truly inclusive learning environment that empowers every student to succeed. As the first K-8 IB public charter school in San Diego, we align with the International Baccalaureate (IB) mission to nurture inquiring, knowledgeable, and compassionate learners who are prepared to engage as multilingual, critical thinkers. We believe in equipping all students with the skills, confidence, and resilience needed to contribute meaningfully to the world. This policy provides a framework for our approach to inclusion, ensuring every student has equitable access to quality education, supportive services, and an environment where diversity is valued.

### Principles

We support IB's statement that, *"Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers...Inclusion is the learner profile in action, an outcome of dynamic learning communities."*

#### 1. Commitment to Inclusive Education

AEACS supports IB's statement that, *"Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers...Inclusion is the learner profile in action, an outcome of dynamic learning communities."* At AEACS, inclusion is central to our work, fostering a school community where all students, regardless of learning needs, are valued and supported in achieving their full potential.

#### 2. Equitable Access to Learning Opportunities

We ensure that students with disabilities, as well as those with varied linguistic, social, and emotional needs, have equal access to education. AEACS adheres to federal and state regulations, including IDEA, ADA, and Section 504, to safeguard the rights of all students to participate fully in academic and extracurricular programs.

#### 3. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Approach

UDL principles guide our instruction, creating a learning environment that responds to the diverse needs of each student. Through flexible approaches to content, process, and assessment, we enable all students to access the curriculum, engage actively, and demonstrate their strengths.

#### 4. Collaboration and Family Engagement

Recognizing the importance of collaboration, AEACS actively involves families, educators, and specialists in designing and implementing support plans. We maintain open communication with families to build a shared understanding of each student's needs, strengths, and progress.

### **Practices and Instructional Approaches**

#### ***Access to the General Education Curriculum***

Albert Einstein Academy Charter School follows an inclusive special education model. The IB defines inclusion as, “an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers” (*Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes*, 2010). In order to meet this standard, teachers are mindful of responding positively to the unique needs of each student and developing policies and practices to include all students. On a daily basis, students with special needs are included in general education classes and extracurricular activities to the fullest extent possible. Instructional assistants provide in-class support for students with IEPs and work closely with the general education teachers and Education Specialists to provide in-depth information about student progress and needs. We work to uphold the legal right that all students must be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in order to meet his or her educational needs. We also recognize that inclusion is not always the best practice for every student.

#### ***Teaching to Variability***

According to IB, “*Learner variability and diversity is valued in IB classrooms so that all students are offered opportunities to make sense of the complexities of the world around them, as well as equipping them with the skills and dispositions needed for taking responsible action for the future.*”

Teachers and support staff at AEACS develop strategic plans for differentiation and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in collaboration with grade level and/or departmental teams, families, SST Teams, Wellness Teams, and IEP Team members. Teachers and support staff identify individual students' needs and provide differentiated instruction to meet them. Teachers and support staff also exercise Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies to meet the intellectual, physical, and social emotional needs of the students. We seek to remove all barriers to enhance student agency, giving learners the personalized approach they need to do their best. UDL provides meaningful and challenging learning opportunities that are inclusive of all. Teachers utilize concepts to establish connections within and across disciplines, to foster inquiry and promote critical thinking.

All general education teachers have access to IEP and 504 plan information, such as accommodations, modifications and goals to assist in creating differentiated lessons and unit planners that meet the specific needs of all learners. There are four specific elements that teachers can differentiate in the classroom to

meet the needs of all learners:

- *Content* - what the student will learn
- *Process* - how the student will learn the content
- *Products* - what the student will produce to demonstrate mastery of content
- *Learning Environment* - how the classroom looks and feels

AEACS meets the special education needs of our students by creating services and supports that exceed the minimum required for compliance with federal and state special education law. We accomplish our mission by monitoring the unique academic needs of each individual. Systems and resources are allocated to provide students with a learning environment that engages them at their instructional level. In order to accomplish our mission, we believe that the school needs to regularly evaluate the special education service delivery model to ensure that all AEACS students are given access to the IB PYP and MYP programs and are supported in their pathway to success.

### ***Identification and Intervention***

*Our special education identification and intervention framework is committed to ensuring all students with disabilities receive the individualized support they need to thrive. This framework follows a structured, data-informed process for identifying students who may benefit from special education services. Child Find Law ensures that all children, including those who are homeless, wards of the state, or attend private schools, have access to appropriate educational opportunities. When students demonstrate ongoing challenges that persist despite differentiated instruction and targeted interventions through the SST (Student Success Team) process, they may be referred for a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility for special education with parent consent. If a student qualifies, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed to outline the specialized instruction and related services needed to support the student's unique academic, behavioral, and social-emotional goals. Progress monitoring and regular assessments ensure that each intervention aligns with the student's growth, enabling our team to make data-driven decisions to adapt support and enhance learning outcomes. Through this framework, our school is dedicated to providing equitable access and fostering an inclusive learning environment for all students.*

### ***Student Success Team Meetings***

- **Early Identification and Support:** The SST process is a proactive mechanism for identifying students who may need extra academic, behavioral, or social-emotional support. This aligns with AEA's commitment to inclusivity by helping students access targeted interventions in the general education setting.
- **Collaborative Problem-Solving:** The SST process brings together the school counselor, general education teachers, and families to develop strategies and accommodations.

- **Data-Driven Interventions:** The SST process is a commitment to data-informed decision-making. By regularly monitoring students' progress, the SST ensures that interventions are effective and that students continue to succeed in inclusive settings.
- **Tiered Intervention System:** The SST process bridges general education and special education by creating a continuum of support. This includes how AEA identifies students needs, implements supports, and the process to consider a more restrictive environment with intensive interventions or special education referrals when necessary.

Student Success Team (SST) Meetings are an opportunity to bridge home and school in collaboratively analyzing a student's behavioral and/or academic performance to determine a plan of action for improvement within the general education setting, prior to considering special education services in a more restrictive setting. The meetings are intended for general education students who may have processing, emotional, behavioral, social challenges or academic struggles. The decision to schedule an Initial SST meeting for a student is made only **after** Tier I & II interventions, Universal Design for Learning, accommodations, agreed upon assessments, and clear communication with the family have all taken place, without resulting in adequate student progress. The majority of SST meetings result in the creation of data driven, measurable goals for improvement.

This meeting typically includes teachers, parents, support teachers, a school counselor, and when needed, an administrator. Follow-up SST meetings are held in order to measure the effectiveness of the intervention plan, as well as to gather information regarding the student's response to, and rate of progress with, intervention. The SST Team may recommend assessment for Special Education or a 504 Plan based on the data collected and exhausting regular education resources

SST Referral Criteria: A student may be referred according to the following criteria:

- The student is below grade level academically based up agreed upon grade level assessment data or is demonstrating significant behavioral needs
- The student isn't making progress despite documented Tier I and Tier II academic and/or behavior interventions over a minimum 6 week data cycle
- Teachers have met in real time with the family at least once to discuss related concerns
- Teachers have communicated with the Administration, sharing evidence of tiered interventions, relevant assessment data, and recap of family meeting, and all have agreed to move forward with an SST meeting

The SST Process:

- Initial SST Meeting
- Intervention Form including specific goals
- Follow-up SST meeting(s)
  - If a student is making progress on goals, the SST team will set new goals and continue or modify the intervention plan as necessary.
  - If a student is not making progress on goals, the SST team may recommend assessment

for a general education 504 Plan or special education (IEP).

- If student has met goals and is performing at grade level with previous areas of concern, then he or she is exited from the SST Process (these records are held and reviewed internally)

Our school's guiding principle is to provide a comprehensive special education program within the PYP and MYP. We monitor students' progress in the areas of academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs through Student Success Team (SST) meetings, which include: parents/guardians, general education teacher(s), counselors, and when needed, an administrator, and any other support teachers who work with the student. For students identified with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, teachers are provided information regarding learning strengths and challenges, goals, accommodations, modifications, background, and educational history.

We adhere to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) for students with IEPs and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for students with 504 Plans. Albert Einstein Academies' comprehensive special education program meets and exceeds the requirements of IDEA and ADA by progress monitoring students with academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs. IEP and 504 meetings are held annually, and more frequently, when needed. All IEP/504 team members are informed and trained to understand the unique learning profile of a student with an IEP or 504 plan. The goal is to ensure that all students are progressing in all areas.

In order to ensure compliance with IDEA and ADA(Americans with Disability Act), we continually monitor ourselves by evaluating if students with disabilities are receiving a quality education that is comparable to their general education peers. All students with an IEP or 504 Plan are included in the general education classroom, field trips, and extracurricular programs to the maximum extent possible. It is encouraged that special education students involve themselves in extracurricular opportunities and field trips to maximize opportunities for growth in social skills.

### **Legal Framework and Compliance**

- Commitment to Laws and Regulations: Reference relevant federal and state laws (such as IDEA, ADA, and Section 504) that protect students' rights and emphasize the school's adherence to these regulations.

Non-Discrimination Statement: Include a statement ensuring that no student will be excluded from participation in school activities or discriminated against based on disability or educational need.

### **Resources**

AEACS provides a wealth of resources and learning opportunities for teachers and students alike. Professional development in the areas of IB, special education, literacy, Common Core State Standards, ELD Standards, IEP legal guidelines, and more are encouraged by administration and regularly attended by teachers and support staff. The special education department at AEACS works directly with the El Dorado County Charter Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) to stay updated on information

regarding changes in the field of special education.

AEACS provides access to a variety of specialists such as: School Psychologists, Education Specialists, School Counselors, Speech/Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Itinerant Teacher, Educational Audiologist, Adapted Physical Education Teacher, Vision Therapist, and Assistive Technology Specialist. These related services, among others, are provided through our school as determined by each student's IEP and specific needs.

### **Confidentiality**

AEACS respects and maintains the confidentiality of all student records. We uphold the legal requirement that all information regarding students' special needs must be kept confidential. AEACS uses a secure, online system for writing IEP's that is only accessible by direct service providers. Relevant information contained in each student's IEP or 504 Plan is shared internally with the teachers and support staff who work directly with those students. We foster a supportive environment where students feel safe and valued, free from stigma.