PVCICS IB Special Education Needs/Inclusive Education Policy

Philosophy

The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS) International Baccalaureate Program strives to build a community that is supportive of all students and will make every effort to ensure that all students are provided the necessary support to allow them to achieve academic success as they progress through the IB Program.

- Inclusion is "an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement for all students by identifying and removing barriers." (Learning diversity and inclusion in the IB Programmes, 2018, p. 1)
- Inclusion is a continual process of increasing learning and participation for all students. It meets learning support requirements and engages the student in the process of advocating for themselves and communicating with their needs with the school.
- Diversity is an essential component to international mindedness, caring, and open-mindedness and applies to students with special needs.
- Inclusion requires utilizing a multitude of teaching and learning strategies so that all students have access to the curriculum.
- Inclusion is based on removing barriers to learning so that all students can be successful.

PVCICS is an "IB for all" program. All students are encouraged to attempt the full IB Diploma Program regardless of learning challenges.

Mission

The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS) is a K-12th grade educational program that produces academically strong students highly proficient in Chinese and English. The program goals are:

- To develop proficiency in Mandarin Chinese.
- To maintain and extend students' proficiency in English.
- To develop high levels of academic attainment, meeting or exceeding national and state standards, through rigorous study and instruction aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.
- To develop students' understanding of Chinese culture and the ability to interact successfully with others whose language and/or culture differs from their own.

The Chinese name for PVCICS is 先 鋒 中 英 双 语 学 校 ("xian1 feng1 zhong1 ying1 shuang1 yu3 xue2 xiao4"[2], literally "Pioneer Chinese English Bilingual School").

Policy

In order to provide appropriate services and interventions for student success, the PVCICS' IB community is required to follow the following United States' requirements. The following federal statutes address the rights of children with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE): Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDA), and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). FAPE is a civil right rooted in the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States constitution which includes Equal Protection and Due Process clauses. Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the United States Department of Education (ED). Section 504 provides: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States…shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity needing financial assistance.

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[1] Throughout this document, proficiency means reading, writing, listening and speaking.

[2] Pinyin Romanization for the Chinese characters.

State and Federal laws must be followed, and the appropriate accommodations must be made. The U.S. government guarantees each school age child an education in the least restrictive environment (aligned with IB Philosophies). Schools must provide this education to all handicapped students between the ages of 3 and 21 years. This was written into federal law as PL 94-142, passed in 1975. Since then the law has been modified and refined by the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA 2004). This law is currently under revision again to be called the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDEA); however, the need to serve diverse learners is still a priority and becoming increasingly important.

The IDEA act requires that public schools create an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each student who is found to be eligible under both the federal and state eligibility/disability standards. The IEP is the cornerstone of a student's educational program. It specifies the services to be provided and how often; describes the student's present levels of performance and how the student's disabilities affect academic performance and specifies accommodations and modifications to be provided for the student.

PVCICS acknowledges that the student is at the center of the program as expressed through the IB Learner Profile. All IB teachers are expected to teach and provide accommodations to any students who are identified as having Special Education Needs in their classrooms. In addition, reasonable adjustment may be made to internal school assignments and schedules related to internally and externally assessed work for students with learning challenges. For example, a student may be given extra time to complete IB assessments.

Students are advised upon program entry of the rigorous program requirements to ensure appropriate placement and academic success in coursework. In addition to employing teaching strategies that include differentiation for students with special needs, students are also supported through special arrangements if necessary. The IB publication, *Candidates with Special Assessment Access Requirements,* will be referenced to provide support for program completion. The Diploma Program Coordinator will submit to the IB the appropriate accommodations form, along with necessary documentation, requesting Assessment modifications when needed for individual students.

"*The IB believes that all candidates should be allowed to take their examinations under conditions that are as fair as possible. Where normal examination conditions and assessment procedures would put candidates at a disadvantage and prevent them from being able to demonstrate their skills and knowledge adequately, reasonable forms of assessment arrangements may be authorized. Candidates eligible for inclusive assessment arrangements are those with individual needs such as a specific learning difficulty, an emotional or behavioral difficulty, physical, sensory, or medical conditions, or mental health problems"* (Diploma Programme Assessment Procedures, May 2022). We believe in supporting all students, including those with special needs so that conditions for the program are as fair and equitable as possible.

PVCICS recognizes that the IB program assesses students on both content and process. For some students with special needs this creates increased challenges. A 504/EAL/Special Education team, composed of the student, the parent, teachers, counselors, the IB Coordinator, and administrators at the school and district level will meet during course selection to discuss particular special education challenges as related to the IB program. Students and parents should be apprised of specific IB course requirements prior to and throughout the process of earning the IB Diploma or Course Candidates increase success in both the courses and exams. We recognize the need for all stakeholders, including the student, to work together to make fair and appropriate accommodation for success. Requested accommodations may include, but are not limited to additional time, computer use, appropriate adaptive tools, and translating dictionaries, among others.

The IB Coordinator will ensure that all required documentation is in place for students to receive appropriate accommodation and that teaching staff knows which accommodations students may receive on their May exams. The coordinator will collect evidence and apply for testing accommodations by November 15 of each school year.

Information for families regarding documentation and requesting accommodations:

The International Baccalaureate Organization requires that students requesting accommodations have testing to support the request within one year of beginning the program. This testing sometimes occurs in the student's normal testing cycle but most often does not. This means that most students need additional testing in either grades 10 or 11 to qualify for testing accommodations during the IB Exams. Parents/Guardians are responsible for having their child testing and providing documentation to PVCICS.

According to the International Baccalaureate website, the responsibilities of parents/guardians are as follows:

Parents/Guardians will:

- communicate to the school all information and documentation regarding their child's inclusion needs.
- communicate to the school regarding any changes in their child's inclusion needs.
- make a request for needed services from the school and/or the IB Program in a proactive manner.
- arrange for and pay for testing.
- provide documentation for IBO inclusive assessment arrangement requests.

The following guidelines can be shared with the psychologist conducting the testing to ensure that they provide the necessary information:

Supporting documentation

To submit requests for access arrangements, two forms of supporting documentation are required to be uploaded to the online application "Request of inclusive assessment arrangements". The first document is a psychological/psycho-educational/medical report from a psychological or medical service and the second is educational evidence from the school.

A psychological/psycho-educational/medical report may be written by medical, health, educational or psychological professionals with appropriate qualifications and/or professional licenses in their country of residence.

It is not permitted for a relative of the candidate to write or be involved in the writing of the report.

All psychological/psycho-educational/medical reports must:

• be legible, on paper with a letterhead, signed and dated
• state the title, name and professional credentials of the person (or persons) who has undertaken the evaluation and diagnosis of the candidate
• state specifically the nature of the learning support requirement, and the tests or techniques used to arrive at the identification
• be consistent with the coordinator's request for assessment arrangements
• be accompanied by a translation into English, French or Spanish, if it is not written in one of the IB working languages.

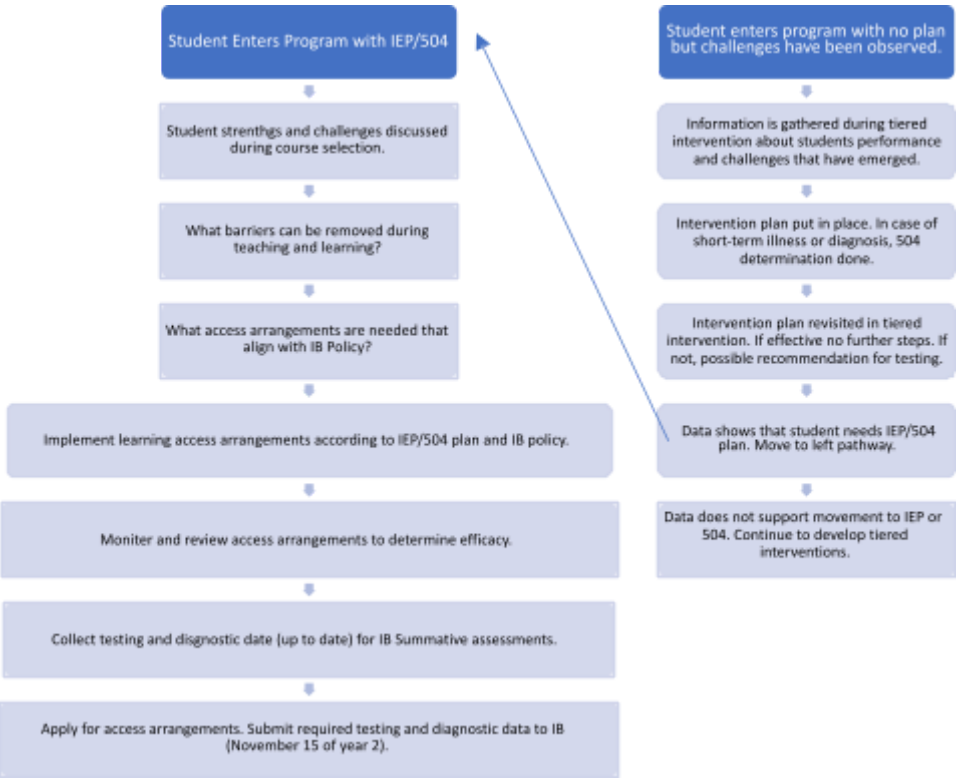
All psychological/psycho-educational reports must:

• be based on the candidate's performance on nationally standardized psychological tests (where available and published, recent editions of standardized tests should be employed)
• report results as standard scores, which have a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15, and not percentiles or age/grade equivalents

Furthermore, it is not mandatory to test in all areas; the assessment may be in line with the candidate's learning support requirements. For example, if a student with learning support requirements only has difficulties in writing for which the school provides the use of speech recognition software, then the psychological report need not contain standard scores in reading and mathematics.

Please refer to Massachusetts law below regarding testing for College Board and IB Programs:
http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/04_3.html

PVCICS Process



Policy Review

This access and inclusion policy is a living document that needs to be adjusted to the changing needs of the student population and developments in special education. Consequently, it will be reviewed annually by the Principal, SPED Staff, EAL Staff, and IB Coordinator) and communicated by the coordinator via the website.

Sources

- Access and inclusion policy (IBO, 2023)
- Adverse Circumstances Policy (IBO, 2021)
- Learning diversity and inclusion in IB programmes (IBO, 2020)
    - Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2020). Guidance for Implementing IDEA. http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/IDEA2004/default.html
- The IB guide to inclusive education: a resource for whole school development (IBO, 2019)
- Programme Standards and Practices (IBO, 2022)
- Developing and Aligning a school inclusion policy with the Programme standards and practices (IBO, 2023)
    - US Dept. of Education Office of Civil Rights. (2020). Protecting Students with Disabilities. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.htm

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****End of Policy****