

# VHS Inclusion Policy

## Purpose, Mission, and Beliefs

### **A. Purpose of Special Educational Needs Inclusion Policy**

The Special Educational Needs/Inclusion Policy is a working document developed by the faculty, Instructional Leadership Team, and administrators at Vista High School. Consistent with the standards and practices of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB DP), this document provides an overview of VHS's beliefs and practices as they relate to special educational needs and inclusion. This document outlines the processes and philosophies implemented at Vista High School to ensure that:

ALL STUDENTS have access to the DP curriculum and Common Core Standards, in order to fulfill the mission and vision of VHS.

The VHS Inclusion Policy will be reviewed once each semester by the IB staff as well as the head of school and the special education coordinator. Review of this policy is a mandatory agenda item at the IB professional development release day each semester.

### **B. The Vista High School Promise to Students and Families**

Our vision is a promise to prepare our students to meet the challenges of their futures. We promise that every member of the Vista High School community will attend to help students...

- Know who they are: their strengths, interests, values
- Know where they are going: what they hope for in their future

- Know the next steps to get there: school, career, vocation, military
- Build the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to succeed: academic performance, Self-directed learners, Vista CARES

### [Mission and Beliefs](#)

#### **Our North Star: Vista CARES**

With a proud past and a commitment to our future, the Vista High community embodies Pride in Unity, builds Exemplary Character, and inspires Innovative, Critical, and Creative Thinkers. Equally, our community develops the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to succeed in college, career, and life while supporting social-emotional needs.

The Vista High School community will actively create self-directed learners who are:

***Curious:*** We formulate questions based on personal observations and experiences.

We are willing to challenge existing perspectives or a set of knowledge.

***Advocates:*** We effectively voice opinions, develop actionable outcomes based on context, and take actions while respecting an established set of norms.

***Resilient:*** We adapt and learn from experiences that do not go as planned while

keeping our composure.

We understand, develop, and curate

strategies that helps us persevere through challenges.

***Empathetic:*** We demonstrate a universal awareness, understanding, and sensitivity to the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others and act accordingly.

***Socially-emotionally well:*** We develop the capacity to know ourselves, build and maintain supportive relationships, and participate as balanced and responsible citizens.

**VHS believes in an equity model of education.** All students have the right to a high quality Free and Appropriate Public Education. Students with special educational needs are one group of many at our school that receive individualized learning.

## **District Policies Regarding SEN**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Our Special Education Staff is committed to providing specialized academic and behavioral support and services to students with exceptional needs in order to fully engage them in high quality learning

environments that challenge and prepare them to be well-rounded, active members of a global society.

## COMMITMENTS

Our Special Education Staff has identified four key commitments that will ensure this mission is fulfilled:

1. **Responsiveness** – timely communication with students, parents, and staff
2. **Guidance** – program implementation in accordance with federal and state laws
3. **Support** – to create stimulating learning environments
4. **Resolution** – to ensure a free and appropriate public education for all students

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Vista Unified School District Special Education Department offers a continuum of specialized services to meet the unique and individualized needs of each student. We are committed to supporting each student's access to differentiated core instruction in the least restrictive environment, while aligning each IEP (Individualized Education Program) to the Common Core State Standards.

It is important to note that special education is a service provided to students with exceptional needs. Special education is not a location or specific classroom. Special education is intended to provide a full range of services in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): the instructional setting that is most similar to the instructional setting attended by general education students. The LRE requires that students with

disabilities are to be educated to the maximum extent possible with children who are not disabled.

# **Inclusion**

Vista High School is committed to the success of each student, and is sensitive to the diverse learning needs of its population. The Vision of our school is based on four promises (see above), which hold true for all students. We believe that, with adequate levels of support, all students may be successfully included in the IB program.

Our school is governed by United States and State of California law regarding students with special needs according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Compliance with these mandates is driven by the special education department at our school and carried out by all staff members.

## **Students with Special Educational Needs**

All students have the right to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in their least restrictive environment (LRE). VHS provides an inclusive academic model for all students. Accommodations stated in a student's IEP or 504<sup>1</sup> plan are implemented through a collaborative process in the general education classrooms.

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<sup>1</sup> 504 plans are for students with medical conditions that require specific accommodations

## **Students identified as having Special Educational Needs:**

SLD (Specific Learning Disability)

Other Health Impairments (including ADHD)

ASD (Autism/Asperger's Syndrome)

Cerebral Palsy

Traumatic Brain Injury

Vision Impaired

Hearing Impaired

Orthopedic Impairment

Emotional Disturbance

Medical Conditions

Mental Health Conditions

# **Support Given and Services Provided**

The students with Special Educational Needs listed above are supported by the following programs and services at VHS:

- Evaluation for Special Education Services
- Individualized Education Program with an assigned Education Specialist
- Inclusion support in general education classes
- Study Skills courses
- Assistive Technology
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Counselors
- School Psychologist

- Social Work
- Behavior Support
- Social Emotional Academic Support
- Universal supports including: counselors, wellness classes, Panther After Hours tutors, Panther Time academic intervention class

Students with Special Educational Needs are provided an offer of FAPE through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Students are included in the general education environment to the greatest extent possible in accordance with their LRE. For some students this means a self-contained classroom (SEAS) and inclusion for a portion of the day when possible. For most students, the LRE involves full inclusion with specialized academic support and one class period of specialized academic support in a separate setting (Study Skills). Specific services are outlined in each student's IEP.

**Accommodations and interventions that are frequently utilized:**

- Assistive technology
- Small group instruction
- Sentence starters and paragraph frames
- Visual aids
- Chunked assignments
- Extended time
- Simplified directions
- Organizational support
- Test retake opportunities
- Modeling
- Collaborative groups
- Extended learning opportunities

# Roles in Supporting SEN

## Education Specialist

- Provide specialized academic instruction in content areas, as well as social skills, organization, study skills, and learning strategies in classes of up to 13 students and supporting general education classes
- Manage a caseload of up to 22 students
- Write and develop Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities in order to develop goals and assess progress
- Communicate and support the implementation of accommodations, modifications, and supports outlined in each student's IEP
- Provide general education teachers with an IEP "at a glance" for each student
- Provide general education teachers with behavior supports for students with behavior goals and Behavior Intervention Plans on their IEPs
- Communicate and collaborate with General Education teachers
- Provide assessments for students referred for special education services and for triennial reviews of IEPs

## General Education/Subject Area Teachers

- Collaborate with the Special Education teachers to create scaffolds and accommodations to meet the needs of all students



- Monitor academic growth and behavior and report to the Education Specialist. Provide input for IEPs via an input form provided by the Special Education Teacher
- Implement accommodations and modifications as outlined in each student's IEP
- Attend IEP meetings
- Participate in Student Success Team (SST) meetings to develop strategies and interventions for students that are struggling academically, both with, and without IEPs
- Ensure and support the implementation of accommodations, modifications, and supports outlined in each student's IEP
- Provide instruction in social skills, organization, study skills, and learning strategies

#### Instructional Aides - LH

- Provide support to students in general and special education settings
- Provide support and instruction in small groups to support the achievement of students' goals and academic growth
- Assist the Education Specialists with implementing curriculum and individual academic support during Study Skills classes
- Communicate student's academic progress with the Education Specialist

#### Instructional Assistant - Behavioral Intervention

same functions as Instructional Aides with a few key additions:

- implement behavior plans

- Use crisis prevention and de-escalation techniques when necessary (if certified)
- Collect behavioral data
- Work 1:1 with assigned students

#### SH - medical aide

- 1:1 or in a group setting
- Provide medical assistance as necessary

#### LVN - 1:1 Nurse

- Ensure that the student's medical needs are met

#### School Psychologist

- Administers assessments for students referred for special education services and for triennial reviews of IEPs
- Provides counseling services outlined in IEPs

#### Speech-Language Pathologist

- Provides services to students with speech and/or language disabilities within the directives of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA); providing pertinent information and consultant services to staff members and parents; ongoing student evaluation and progress monitoring, planning with regular classroom teachers and intervention for students who qualify for services

# SEN Practices

## Student Success Teams

- SST meetings are held when a teacher, parent, guardian or other stakeholder feels that the academic, speech/language acquisition, or behavioral/emotional needs of the student are not being met by the student's current circumstances.
- Student Success Teams pay close attention to frequent absences, tardies, and behavioral/health issues to determine their root cause/s.
- Team members meet to discuss interventions and support to help the student succeed, and parent consent must be documented.
- Parent or guardian must be informed of their right to request a special education assessment at any time.
- At this point, if a parent requests an assessment, the special education department must be notified immediately and an assessment must be done.

## Identification and Referral to SEN

- Referrals can be made by teachers, parents, agencies, appropriate professionals, and other stakeholders.
- If, after the resources of general education have been considered and utilized, the SST suspects a disability exists which may require special education, the team makes a referral for evaluation.
- The SEN program must provide a written response to a request for assessment within 15 days.
- The SEN specialist assumes case management responsibilities, completing the assessment plan and prior

written notice and providing the parent with a [Notice of Procedural Safeguards](#).

### Evaluation

- A plan describing the proposed assessments is delivered to the parents within 15 calendar days of receipt of the written referral for assessment.
- Once the assessment plan is received, the school has 60 days (excluding breaks longer than 5 days) to complete the assessment and hold an initial IEP meeting to determine eligibility.
- Education specialists must make a COPY of the Multi-Disciplinary report and share it with all assessors.
- Each assessor must complete appropriate sections of the Multi-Disciplinary report.
- If parents or guardians request a copy of the report, it must be sent home prior to the termination of the meeting.
- School staff and stakeholders can meet for a staff meeting prior to the initial IEP meeting to discuss assessment results.

## **Communication with Families and the Community**

At VHS, we encourage open two-way communication between school members and the community. This includes, but is not limited to emails, phone calls, community information nights, Back To School Night, school tours, eighth grade orientation and recruitment presentations, and individual meetings. One purpose of this document

is to communicate to all stakeholders in our IB community the program expectations of the inclusive environment created and maintained at VHS. Further information regarding VHS policies is available on school and district websites. IB specific documentation is available to the community on our IB website, which is linked to the school honors page.

IEPs and 504 plans are reviewed and updated annually by the student's team. Team members include parents, the student, teachers, administrators, and service providers. Additional meetings may be requested by any team member when there is a concern regarding the student or the document in question needs to be amended. During these meetings, a primary function is to both inform parents and document their concerns and requests regarding their students.