

Hubbell Elementary

Inclusion/Special Education Needs Policy

Hubbell Elementary School empowers diverse learners through inquiry-based opportunities that promote lifelong learning.

Special Education Needs Philosophy

At Hubbell Elementary, we believe all children can learn. We recognize that all students come to school with a varying degree of experiences, prior knowledge, interests and abilities. Hubbell teachers embrace this diversity and strive to provide all students with learning experiences that allow them to become creative, problem-solving students that embody the learner profile attributes. We understand each student plays a vital role in creating a compassionate and caring school community based upon intercultural understanding and respect. We firmly believe that all of our students will become “active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right” (IBO mission statement).

Practices Reflecting Philosophy

Differentiated instruction

Hubbell Elementary teachers recognize that students identified with special needs require instruction, assessment, and feedback designed to fit their unique learning styles and prior knowledge. Whenever possible, classroom and special education teachers at Hubbell Elementary collaborate together in order to provide differentiated instruction to all learners in a comprehensive, inclusive environment. Through frequent collaborative planning and reflecting, the classroom teacher and special education teacher are able to determine the different teaching approaches and tools each student needs in order to successfully meet the curriculum standards and objectives. Collaboration between teachers within the context of an inclusive environment benefits not only students identified with special needs, but students not identified as well. All students, identified or not, must receive instruction differentiated to their learning styles and needs in order to be successful. Collaboration among teachers ensures more differentiating strategies are discussed and implemented throughout units of inquiry. In addition, having students of various abilities in an inclusive environment embodies the learner profile—learning to work and play in an environment full of diversity creates open-minded and caring students who have appreciation, respect, and tolerance of others and their differences. We acknowledge that, at times, differentiated instruction for some students is not appropriate for the general education classroom. In such instances, instruction is provided by the special education teacher in the context of the special education classroom. At Hubbell Elementary, we have three special education teachers, two special education associates, one part-time speech-language pathologist and one full-time reading interventionist to provide differentiated instruction both in and out of the general education classroom. Occupational and physical therapists available upon request.

Affirming identity and building self-esteem

Each classroom at Hubbell Elementary is its own unique and caring community, in which both teachers and students accept and celebrate the different cultures, perspectives, and learning styles of its members. Students are taught to value the input of everyone, to respectfully listen to the perspectives of others with an open-mind and to encourage the social and emotional growth of peers through collaboration and problem-solving. Students who understand and demonstrate these values feel confident in taking risks in and outside of the classroom. All teachers at Hubbell Elementary recognize the vital role they play in helping our students embody the learner profile attributes. Assessment and reflection of the learner profile allows teachers to identify students in need of additional teaching and support of the traits. For these students, additional supports are available throughout the school day. These include:

- Classroom teacher and student reflecting together on the learner profile traits throughout the school day.
- Frequent communication between school and families in regards to student progress towards achievement of individualized goals.
- One-on-one or small group instruction on the learner profile, attitudes, and/or approaches to learning, provided by guidance counselor or by mental health therapist.
- Checking in and out each day with a staff member using a reflection sheet that focuses attention on specific behaviors.
- Creating formal goals and implementing accommodations for student in need of more intense intervention (written in Individualized Education Plans or 504 plans).

Valuing prior knowledge

Teachers at Hubbell Elementary understand the link between prior knowledge and the construction of new meaning. Prior to launching inquiries into new concepts, teachers first take the time to assess and reflect upon the prior knowledge of all students. This prior knowledge is utilized to help students make connections with new knowledge, thus forming deeper, enduring conceptual understandings. Through collaborative planning and reflection, classroom and special education teachers are able to provide differentiated learning experiences that build up prior knowledge, when needed.

Scaffolding

During collaboration meetings, Hubbell Elementary teachers are continually planning and reflecting on ways to scaffold student learning. For some learning experiences, teachers plan out ways to scaffold the experience for all students. For other learning experiences, teachers recognize scaffolding is unnecessary for all students. In these cases, teachers develop differentiated ways to scaffold learning experience in order to ensure success for all students. Although all students need scaffolding at times, these strategies are especially imperative for students with special needs. For some students, specific scaffolding strategies are written into Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or 504 plans. Some scaffolding strategies utilized by teachers are:

- graphic organizers
- various writing strategies, including writing frames and prompts
- visuals
- demonstrations and models
- differentiated teacher language and questioning
- use of mother tongue during initial stages of learning
- small, collaborative groups with added structure
- assistive technology

Extended learning

Students at Hubbell are provided with opportunities to engage in increasingly sophisticated academic tasks. At times, teachers provide specific, rich texts to students along with structured responses that allow students to reflect on the concepts and vocabulary presented within the text. At other times, students are encouraged to make independent choices of rich texts and are given time to explore these texts in the classroom environment. Teachers at Hubbell teach specific grammar and structure of writing, but also engage students frequently in the craft of writing. Students are required to write within the requirements of specific writing genres, but are also given ample time in the classroom to write authentic texts of their own choosing. Students with special education needs, in addition to scaffolding learning experiences, are also provided with assistive technology and software, if appropriate. In these instances, it is written into students' IEPs or 504 plans what type of technology is to be provided and how instruction will be provided on the use of the technology.

Assessment

All students will take part in assessments to the best of their ability. Collaborative planning and reflection allows teachers to design classroom summative and formative assessments that allow students to demonstrate their learning in a way that best matches their strengths and needs as learners. District and state testing will be administered to all students in accordance to the set testing requirements, unless otherwise indicated in a student's IEP or 504 plan.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Classroom teachers, when recognizing an academic or social need of a student is not being met within the contexts of the current curriculum objectives, refer students to the MTSS team. The team works with the classroom teacher to assess a specific skill area, design and implement an appropriate intervention and evaluate the results of the intervention after a set period of time. The goal of the MTSS process is to provide focused, intense instruction, based upon individual learning needs and styles of students in the hopes of helping a student early enough in the learning process in order to avoid future learning issues.

Documentation

IEP

- updated annually by special education teacher, general education teacher, parent/guardian and any other staff who work with student
- must include input and receive approval of parent/guardian
- indicates a goal for every area, academic and social, identified as needing additional support by a special education teacher
- include progress monitoring, updated by special education teacher
- identifies accommodations that must be in place for instruction and assessment
- compliance with IEP overseen by special education consultant

504 Plan

- updated annually by nurse, classroom teacher (if based upon academics), parent/guardian
- identifies accommodations that must be in place for instruction and assessment
- compliance with 504 plan overseen by principal and school nurse