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**Ridgeway High School**

**INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS POLICY**

**Policy Rationale**

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) promotes an inclusive school environment and defines inclusion as an “ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers” (*Learning Diversity in the International Baccalaureate, p. 3*). The U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides an example of one way to identify and remove barriers through its definition of a least restrictive environment. According to the IDEA, a least restrictive environment provides the opportunity for students with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate.

The purpose of this document is to inform all stakeholders of the special education guidelines set forth by federal law for schools to create and maintain the least restrictive educational environment for all learners. The special arrangements described in this document apply to students admitted to the IB program who have special needs that are addressed either by an IEP or 504 Plan.

**Policy Goals**

The goals of this policy are:

* To create a welcoming environment for all students
* To comply with the local, state, and federal laws regarding educating students with disabilities
* To ensure that special needs of students are identified early, assessed, and provided for
* To clarify expectations of families, faculty, administration, and students
* To identify faculty roles and responsibilities
* To enable all students to have equal access to the school’s curriculum and assessment policies

**School Mission & Vision**

* The mission of Ridgeway High School is to foster academic excellence in a safe, nurturing, and diverse environment where students become active learners and well-rounded, engaged world citizens.
* Ridgeway High School is dedicated to providing a positive setting that promotes the intellectual, physical, and social development of each student. The Ridgeway Community will address the needs and interest of students in all levels of academics and extracurricular activities. We will work cooperatively to ensure that students emerge from school as motivated, focused, well-adjusted adults and productive, responsible citizens.

**Ridgeway High School Beliefs**

* Students learn, achieve, and succeed in a safe, supportive, comfortable environment conducive to attaining their full potential.
* Students perform at their highest level and behavior improves when they are challenged and expectations are high.
* Students must develop skills in verbal and written communication, reading, math, science, health, physical fitness, fine arts, humanities, and research.
* Students must be able to use technology proficiently in preparation for life.
* Students must develop personal, educational, and career goals to promote life-long learning and success.
* Diversity helps students make a successful transition from the educational setting to the real world.
* Effective and timely communication with parents/guardians and students fosters a positive attitude toward learning.
* Cooperation and caring among administration, faculty, parents/ guardians, and students provide an atmosphere of respect and fosters integrity.
* Staff development is essential for teachers to function effectively.
* An array of activities such as clubs, athletics, and the arts is essential to the development of well-rounded students.
* Instruction must consider the different learning styles of our student body.
* It is necessary to provide opportunities that develop the desire for, and the practice of, character, leadership, and service to others.

**Shelby County Schools Exceptional Children mission**

The mission of the Shelby County Schools Department of Exceptional Children is to enhance educational opportunities through comprehensive services that address academic, social, health, emotional, psychological, and behavioral needs of students, families, schools, and the community.

**Special Education in Tennessee**

Special education is defined as designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Special education in Tennessee also includes students who are gifted and talented. The mission of the gifted and academically talented program is to provide a nurturing, accepting environment where the unique intellectual, creative, social, and emotional needs of gifted and talented students are fulfilled. Meeting these needs can best be accomplished through an individualized differentiated curriculum and by providing an appropriate, intellectually stimulating environment. These accommodations will enable gifted and talented students to develop their potential and participate effectively in society as citizens and leaders.

An **IEP** is the legal document that defines a child's special education program. An IEP indicates the student’s disability, details services the IEP team has determined the school will provide, and states annual goals, objectives, and accommodations in the general education program needed to assist the student’s learning.

**Federal Laws**

To ensure that Ridgeway High School follows the mission and beliefs to which it ascribes and to ensure that we are in compliance with federal mandates, we follow the federal laws that pertain to special education. Some of those laws are as follows:

* **IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)** is a federal law that requires schools to serve the educational needs of eligible students with disabilities.
* **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act** plays an important role in education for students with disabilities that significantly impact a major life activity.
* The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** protects the civil rights of people with disabilities in all aspects of accessing public accommodations.
* **The Assistive Technology Act** makes sure people with disabilities have access to the assistive technology devices and services that can improve their access and function in the community.

**The purpose of IDEA**

* **To protect the rights of children with disabilities.** IDEA ensures students with disabilities have access to a [free and appropriate public education](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/your-childs-rights/basics-about-childs-rights/at-a-glance-free-and-appropriate-public-education) (FAPE), just like all other children. Schools are required to provide special education in the [least restrictive environment](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/special-education-basics/least-restrictive-environment-lre-what-you-need-to-know). That means schools must teach students with disabilities in general education classroom whenever possible.
* **To give parents a voice in their child’s education.** Under IDEA, parents have a say in the educational decisions the school makes about their child. At every point of the process, the law gives parents specific rights and protections. These are called procedural safeguards.

**Screening process for IDEA/504 eligibility**

* Teacher and/or parents request that a student be evaluated for IDEA or 504 eligibility
* Hearing and vision screening takes place
* Initial paperwork including teacher observations and parent observations is completed
* Paperwork is compiled by the case manager, who is the liaison between the school and the parent and student
* Student support team is held to review the gathered information and determine whether an evaluation is required
* A consent for initial assessment is signed by the parent
* Evaluations are conducted
* Other needed tests and assessments are given by school personnel
* If the student is being evaluated for IDEA eligibility, once initial consent is signed, the District has 60 calendar days to complete evaluations and determine eligibility

**List of accommodations that could be listed in the IEP**

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| **Assignments** | |
|  | Abbreviated assignments (fewer items/questions). |
|  | Additional Time |
|  | Allow alternate assignment/strategy when class demands conflict with IEP goals. |
|  | Allow student to type or tape assignment. |
|  | Assignment book. |
|  | Audio/Video tape directions for student. |
|  | Compacting |
|  | Give directions in alternative format (written/picture/verbal, etc.). |
|  | Give directions in small, distinct steps. |
|  | Give extra cues/prompts on assignments. |
|  | Increase frequency of assignments formatted for learning style strength areas. |
|  | Modify difficulty level of content. |
|  | Modify grading scale (pass/fail or points). |
|  | Modify worksheet/packet format (essay, short answer, fill in blank, multiple choice, etc.). |
|  | No penalty for spelling/handwriting/sloppy. |
|  | Provide extra grade opportunities (re-do items missed, extra credit, etc.). |
|  | Provide grading rubrics with assignment. |
|  | Provide photocopies of pages/items vs. student copying from text/board. |
|  | Read/audio tape ALL text on assignments. |
|  | Study guide. |
|  | Use of calculator. |

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| **Environmental Arrangements** | |
|  | AAC device. |
|  | Audio tape recorder. |
|  | Behavior/Performance Contracting |
|  | Computer. |
|  | Modify room arrangement. |
|  | Peer Tutoring |
|  | Planned/preferential seating. |
|  | Reduce/minimize distractions (visual, auditory, tactile, movement, and/or social). |
|  | See OT/PT report. |
|  | Study carrel. |
|  | Video recorder. |
|  | Word processor. |

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| **Materials** | |
|  | Audio taped textbooks/materials. |
|  | Carbonless or photo copy of peer's class notes. |
|  | Highlighted textbook (student)/study guides. |
|  | Home set of texts/materials for preview/review. |
|  | Large print/magnified photocopies. |
|  | Modify arrangement of material on page. |
|  | Provide copies of material to be copied from book to board |
|  | Provide supplementary materials. |
|  | Tapes of teacher lectures/discussions. |
|  | Typed copies of teacher lectures/notes. |

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| **Pacing** | |
|  | Allow breaks. |
|  | Compacting. |
|  | Flexible time limits. |
|  | Omit tasks requiring copying in timed situations. |
|  | Vary assessment/assignment activity frequently. |

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| **Presentation of Subject Matter** | |
|  | Check often for understanding/review. | |
|  | Emphasize critical information | |
|  | Instruction focuses on IEP goals only. | |
|  | Manipulatives | |
|  | Plan for generalization/teach skills in several settings/situations. | |
|  | Pre-teach vocabulary. | |
|  | Present demonstrations (models). | |
|  | Prompting upon request. | |
|  | Provide copies of notes (from another student). | |
|  | Provide cross-age or same-age peer tutoring. | |
|  | Provide low vocabulary/language materials on topic/theme/concept. | |
|  | Request parent reinforcement of instruction. | |
|  | School text sent home for summer preview | |
|  | Use bodily kinesthetic or hands-on strategies. | |
|  | Use cooperative learning strategies. | |
|  | Use errorless learning strategies. | |
|  | Use experiential learning/examples. | |
|  | Use functional/authentic instruction. | |
|  | Use multiple/rotating peers for groups/tutoring. | |
|  | Use musical/rhythmic strategies. | |
|  | Use self-management strategies. | |
|  | Use spatial/graphic/visual strategies. | |

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| **Testing** | |
|  | Abbreviated concepts tested. |
|  | Additional Time |
|  | Consider learning styles & change assessment mode to Authentic applications of content/concept. |
|  | Consider learning styles & change assessment mode to exhibitions. |
|  | Consider learning styles & change assessment mode to journals. |
|  | Consider learning styles & change assessment mode to performances. |
|  | Consider learning styles & change assessment mode to products. |
|  | Consider learning styles & change assessment mode to reflections. |
|  | Consider learning styles & change assessment mode to visuals. |
|  | Extended Time |
|  | Extended Time (\_\_\_ Minutes of Extended Time) |
|  | Modify content being tested. |
|  | Modify grading scale |
|  | Modify test format (word bank, multiple choice, short answer) |
|  | Oral Testing (Read Aloud Test Items) |
|  | Oral testing for directions and/or test items, |
|  | Prompting upon request. |
|  | Repeating Directions Verbatim |
|  | Shorten test length. |
|  | Use of calculator. |
|  | Use of manipulatives. |
|  | Use of math tables. |

**Special education files include the following: (\* indicates if applicable)**

* An access log that shows who has accessed the file and when
* Signed procedural safeguards form
* State Monitoring Forms/ Student records reviews from previous years
* \*Administrative complains
* \*Official Correspondence/court orders
* \*Release of information forms
* Achievement Test Records
* Referral for Individual Screening
* Response to individual screening
* \*Transportation forms
* IEP/Addendum (current on top)
* Progress reports
* Pre-vocational/vocational assessments
* Meeting Minutes
* Meeting documents
* Invitations/Notices of meetings
* Prior Written Notice
* Initial permission to evaluate
* Assessment instrument selection form
* \*Support Team reports
* \*Behavior Intervention Plans
* \*Manifestation Determination Documents and Minutes
* Eligibility Reports
* Assessment documentation
* Psychological reports
* Evaluations reports
* \*Medical information
* Parent observations
* Teacher observations

All of these documents are put into a file, which is kept under secure conditions in the guidance office. The assigned case manager manages and updates the files. Any current teacher, administrator, or counselor of the concerned student has access to the file while it stays in the file room. Each teacher will be given an IEP-at-a-glance (a shortened document that explains accommodations) for a student he or she teaches. That document will be kept on file in the teacher’s classroom.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Responsibilities of the school:**

* Provide training for staff and faculty to successfully implement and support the needs of students
* Raise staff awareness of the needs of students
* Ensure staff compliance with federal, state, and local laws regarding students with disabilities
* Provide resources for the implementation of the policy
* Provide the IEP to the teachers and host meetings to update the IEP annually
* Consult with IB if any accommodation is necessary for presenting course material, an examination, or for the completion of CAS hours
* Provide guidance and information to students and parents, so that students with special needs can make informed decisions
* Oversee classroom accommodations

**Responsibilities of each faculty member**

* Follow federal, state, and local laws regarding students with special needs
* Accommodate for each child’s special needs as indicated by the IEP or 504 plan
* Communicate with the parents and case managers to ensure the best educational experience possible
* Recognize cultural differences and find compromises to help ensure that candidates from different countries have equitable experiences
* Provide only those special arrangements granted students with special needs by the IBO on IB exams
* Recognize that assignment and testing accommodations are available to create an equitable environment for students with special needs
* Submit work to the school principal for review should a candidate's special arrangements be questioned
* Maintain confidentiality when providing special arrangements and IEP/504 accommodations
* Attend IEP meetings as required by the case managers
* Review and sign the files of all students with special needs he/she teaches
* Receive and review an IEP at a glance for each student with special needs in his/her class

**Responsibilities of parents**

Parents will play an active role in their child’s education in the following ways:

* By requesting evaluation for services if applicable
* By communicating with the teachers and case managers
* By communicating when changes are needed
* By attending IEP/504 meetings to discuss updates and changes in their child’s plan

**Responsibilities of students**

* Communicate his/her feelings and needs
* Participate in discussions and IEP meetings
* Ask for information and support

**Expertise**

**Professional Staff**

Ridgeway High school has a professional staff including a physical therapist, speech pathologist, nurse, occupational therapist, and psychologist. These professionals come to the school each week, and can meet with the students according to the service needs on their IEPs.

**Special Education Teacher Training**

Special education teachers receive professional development within the district at the beginning of the school year. They receive strategies and support from the district. They also attend special called meetings to review legal policy and changes.

**General Education Teacher Training**

Special education teachers support the general education teachers. When a special education student is in the classroom, the special education teacher works with the general education teacher to answer any questions about strategies for the students. In some cases, classes are co-taught by a general education teacher and a special education teacher so that the student can receive the best possible service.

**IB Inclusive Assessment Arrangements**

Ridgeway High School adheres to the IB philosophy that “all candidates must be allowed to take their examinations under conditions that are as fair as possible. Where standard 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 access arrangements may be authorized” (IB Handbook of Procedures 2016).

Any student who has an IEP or a 504 plan is eligible to apply for special arrangements with the IBO. Special arrangements are designed to assist the candidates during their preparation for IB assessments and during written examinations The IB Coordinator has access to a list of acceptable assessment arrangements that are permitted without formal authorization from IB. Special arrangements may include:

* Separate testing location
* Appropriate Seating
* An Assistant
* Visual or Hearing aids
* Clarification of test directions
* Prompter
* Additional time

However, there are some arrangements that may require prior authorization from the IB Assessment Centre. In this case, the IB Coordinator will submit a request for inclusive assessment arrangements to the IBO for all students with special needs who are enrolled in an IB course. All requests must include supporting documentation and be submitted 6 months before the written examinations. Ridgeway High School encourages all students to come forward if they experience any adverse circumstances. The IB Coordinator will file the necessary forms with the IBO as necessary.

**Review of Policy**

The IB Coordinator, all IB teachers and the Head of School will review the Special Education Policy annually. If changes are necessary the team will collaborate to revise and edit the policy as needed.

**Sources**

IBO, *Handbook of Procedures 2016*

IBO, *Learning Diversity in the International Baccalaureate*

Germantown High School*,* Shelby County Schools District, Memphis, TN