

2018-2020
Sunset Ridge Middle School and the Connecticut IB Academy (CIBA)
MYP Inclusion and Special Educational Needs Policy

Philosophy

Sunset Ridge Middle School (SR) and the Connecticut IB Academy (CIBA) fully subscribe to the International Baccalaureate Organization’s belief in the importance of differences and diversity. We believe that all students enrolled in the Middle Years Programme at Sunset Ridge Middle School and CIBA should “receive meaningful and equitable access to the curriculum.” (IBO, 2010) We believe that all students should be empowered through providing opportunities to learn from multiple perspectives and with collaborative and differentiated approaches to teaching and learning. Sunset Ridge Middle School and CIBA focus on creating and maintaining a learning community that values and recognizes the individual strengths and experiences of each member, while simultaneously challenging and holding all students to high expectations. SR/CIBA believe that “inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers.” (IBO, 2011). We believe that all students should be included in “decisions about their learning, [having] the opportunity to develop the attributes of the learner profile and to understand themselves as learners” (IBO, 2013). Sunset Ridge Middle School and Connecticut IB Academy adhere to all local, state and federal regulations regarding students with special needs.

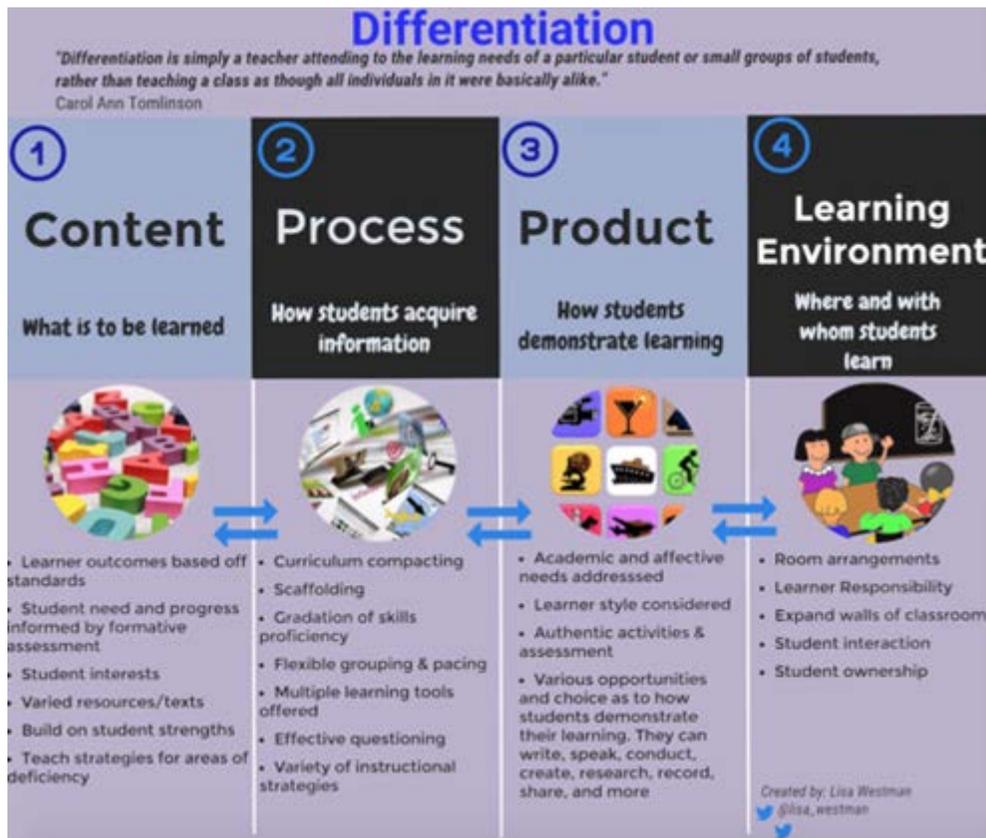
Admissions

The Middle Years Programme partnership offered at SR and CIBA accepts students through district school choice and open choice lottery, respectively. There are no academic prerequisites in either process, as we value and believe in the potential of all students to attain success as measured by IB and the national and state standards. At CIBA, the lottery is regulated, administered, and supervised by the Connecticut State Department of Education’s Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) in compliance with the Sheff vs. O’Neill decree and settlement agreement.

Differentiation

It is the expectation that teachers differentiate daily for all students. Differentiation can take place through content, process, product, and learning environment (see chart below). Teachers should identify and be aware of each student’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and strive to create assignments and assessments that keep each student at an appropriate level of rigor as they progress through the learning sequences. Focusing on both the IB Learner Profile and Approaches to Learning (communication skills, social skills, research skills, self-management

skills, thinking skills) creates an additional way to differentiate for students. In being reflective and open-minded, students closely consider their own learning and experiences while understanding others. This allows students to better understand their abilities and use this knowledge to advocate for themselves and their individual needs. By encouraging students to be inquirers and thinkers, those students who learn in a different way have more opportunity to showcase their abilities while following their natural curiosity. The IB concept of encouraging risk-taking behaviors as well as caring and principled thought allows students of varied abilities to express themselves in an open and accepting forum without negative judgment or fear of humiliation. In developing young communicators who express their ideas in a variety of modes of communication, the special education student's individual differences become less obvious, or possibly celebrated as the idea of "difference" shifts to a positive light. These students become knowledgeable as they are provided the opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across multiple disciplines. By applying IB principles and practices, the teachers have a multitude of avenues to best educate all students so they reach their educational potential.



Scaffolding

Breaking down content and skills into manageable parts is a common way to assist all students, including those who have special needs, to be successful. Teachers add temporary supports at the beginning of a challenging learning activity so that it is possible for the student to succeed. These supports, such as graphic organizers, partial outlines, templates and/or structured groups, are gradually removed to allow students to take full responsibility for their own learning. Utilizing the gradual release of responsibility model allows students to become increasingly independent.

Scientifically Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)

Sunset Ridge Middle School and the Connecticut IB Academy, in alignment with East Hartford Public Schools, uses Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) also known as Response to Intervention (RTI) nationally. This three--tiered framework provides intervention and educational supports for all students at increasing levels of intensity based on their individual needs. The goal is early intervention to foster success for all students in Tier I.

SR/CIBA utilize the district's Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI) pyramid (see Appendix A) and incorporate IB principles and practices to aid teachers in assisting students that require specialized instruction. This pyramid is divided into the following three Tiers (for both academic and behavior):

- **Tier I** includes approaches to teaching and learning and differentiation for all students;
- **Tier II** includes targeted group interventions in addition to Tier I. Students receiving Tier II interventions have a collaboratively-written action plan including a SMART goal, progress monitoring, and documentation of the outcome.
- **Tier III** includes additional, intensive and individualized interventions for students whose level two plans do not achieve the intended results. Students receiving Tier III interventions also have a collaboratively-written action plan including a SMART goal, progress monitoring, and documentation of the outcome.

NOTE: All three tiers are part of a comprehensive educational system. Therefore, the tiers should not be viewed as categorical placements or as “gates” to special education supports and services. Referral for special education evaluation can be considered at any point in the process if data demonstrates continued lack of response to interventions.

SR/CIBA teachers have dedicated time to discuss appropriate interventions for students who require Tier II or Tier III support, ranging from once a week to once a month. Those students who are not responding to intervention, with adequate documentation, are referred for a special education evaluation (for CIBA students the student's sending district will be contacted). If the student qualifies for special education services (a decision that is made at the PPT), then the student receives support either from within the East Hartford Public Schools (if they are East Hartford residents) or from their sending districts for CIBA (as required by law). Students

who come to SR/CIBA with IEPs receive the support mandated by the IEP. At SR/CIBA, all teachers support and encourage students of all abilities to solve problems creatively and to become internationally minded learners.

Intervention Procedures

SR/CIBA uses SRBI/MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) of intervention, whereby the first step is high quality instruction for **all** students. Teachers focus upon appropriately scaffolding instruction and providing authentic opportunities for differentiation to make the concepts and essential skills accessible to every student in Tier I. Through the IB Unit Development cycle, teachers intentionally plan instruction that is both horizontally and vertically aligned while considering students' needs. Differentiation, regular formative assessments to monitor student understanding, criterion-based assessment to isolate the skills wherein students need further support and practice, and the incorporation of varied and leveled materials, activities, and assessments are all included in our IB units. SR/CIBA teachers believe in identifying and meeting students at their level, and then providing the necessary tools and strategies they need to progress academically. Formative and summative assessments vary in terms of verbal and nonverbal; written, oral, and kinesthetic; and individual and collaborative. By providing students with choices on how they want to represent their learning and honoring multiple modalities, all students are able to reach high levels of learning.

Additional Interventions

For Tier II and Tier III students SR/CIBA offer a number of interventions, including online programs such as iXL for mathematics, LEXIA, ReadingPlus, and Mindplay Virtual Reading Coach (MVRC) program which are monitored by the teacher or specialist. CIBA has a part-time literacy tutor to whom students are referred. CIBA also has a fully-developed peer tutoring program. Beyond CIBA, students may be referred to supplemental programs offered at East Hartford High School, such as MathLab, designed as a co-curricular program to assist students with challenges in mathematics.

There are Tier II and Tier III interventions in place for students at Sunset Ridge Middle School for both Math and Reading. In addition to a full-time interventionist, instructional tutors are used for literacy and math interventions. A trained tutor provides individual or small group interventions. Reading interventions include Soar to Success (SOAR), Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), and Fluency. The intervention program is carefully chosen for each student based on both the universal screening (STAR) and diagnostic assessments. Students meet in small groups with a trained instructional tutor to strengthen their strategies and improve their literacy skills to progress through the MYP.

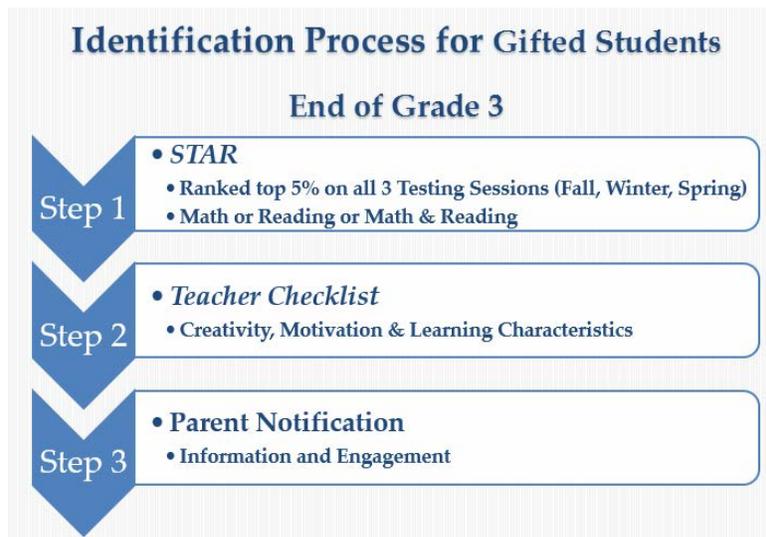
School Services Provided

Sunset Ridge and the Connecticut IB Academy, in alignment with East Hartford Public Schools, strive to provide services to support student development in all areas. All students have access to the following services as needed:

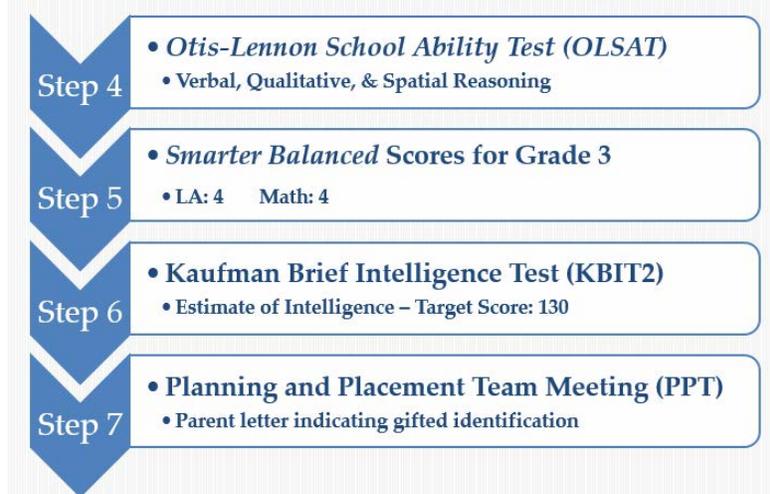
- guidance program
- school psychologist
- certified social workers
- behavior managers
- student support center
- nursing services
- Dental Clinic
- Intercommunity (CIBA only)

Gifted

According to section 10-76 of the CGS (11/2009), gifted students are identified as students of “extraordinary learning ability...identified on the performance on relevant standardized measures.” The East Hartford Public Schools’ Gifted Program is committed to delivering an individualized program that further promotes the exceptionalities of children who demonstrate evidence of higher performance capability in academics than their same age peers. They are identified following the process below:



Cont'd. Identification Process: Beginning of Grade 4



Gifted students also have a need for accommodations to achieve their full potential. Research has shown that a large number of students who become disengaged with school or even drop out are gifted students who have become bored or are not regularly challenged at their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). At SR/CIBA, we strive to keep all students actively engaged through differentiating at a higher level for these students. Differentiation for gifted students does not mean more work, it means deeper, more challenging learning opportunities.

Inclusion

Our schools follow an inclusion model to provide support for students with 504 plans and identified students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students with special education needs are provided access to the curriculum in the least restrictive environment. The least restrictive environment ranges from the regular, comprehensive classroom where classroom teachers and specialists follow an inclusive approach and collaborate regularly, to resource support for a portion of the day. Teachers and specialists frequently assess students to determine each child's individual needs and provide any special services, modifications, accommodations, and/or materials they require to access the curriculum and achieve their highest potential. For students demonstrating academic talents in a particular area, teachers address those needs through classroom differentiation. Regardless of the type of need, teachers collect and analyze data, monitor progress, set and update goals with the students. Families are involved in this process. Please refer to the assessment policy for more specific information regarding this process.

At our schools, we adhere to federal guidelines governing the education of students with disabilities, The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). It is designed to protect the rights of students by ensuring that everyone receives a free, appropriate, public education regardless of ability level. Furthermore, IDEA strives not only to grant equal access to students with

disabilities, but also to provide additional special education services and procedural safeguards. This includes the provision, coordination, and monitoring of services as required in the student's IEP. Through our structures and systems, the value of inclusion for all students is promoted and communicated.

Accommodations and Services

Examples of accommodations that are utilized are the following:

- preferential seating
- leveled texts
- modified assignments
- small group instruction
- scribe
- reader
- extended time
- behavioral modifications
- alternate testing environment
- FM system for hearing impaired

This is not an exhaustive list. Please note that the accommodations listed above are utilized after careful consideration of a particular student's needs through assessment data.

The following are some services provided for students who receive special education services as their IEP specifies:

- speech and language services
- school psychologist/certified social workers
- resource room
- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- extended school year (ESY)

Assessment

Assessment for all students is described in the assessment policy. During a PPT, members of the team will determine what assessments and screening tools are necessary for an individual student. These assessments and screening tools will be acquired by the district as needed. For students that receive special education services, the testing accommodations and modifications in their IEPs are adhered to when he/she takes an assessment.

Conclusion

At Sunset Ridge Middle School and the Connecticut IB Academy, we present a broad, balanced, and academically demanding and rigorous curriculum for all of our students, while recognizing

individual learning styles and providing accommodations for our diverse population. This helps individual students affirm their identity within the learner profile, set personal goals in the “Approaches to Learning,” and become successful learners. We focus on developing critical thinking and reflective skills, research skills, and the development of independent learning, while incorporating intercultural and global understanding. Through recognizing the individual strengths and needs of our students, teachers at Sunset Ridge Middle School and the Connecticut IB Academy work to ensure the success of all students, and guide all students towards becoming global leaders.

Communicating the Inclusion and Special Educational Needs Policy

The inclusion and special educational needs policy is regularly communicated to all staff, families, and stakeholders. It is posted on both Sunset Ridge Middle School’s and the Connecticut IB Academy websites.

Reviewing the Policy

The MYP coordinator will ensure that the inclusion and special educational needs policy is reviewed and revised every two years to reflect the current needs of the school population and to ensure consistency with IB expectations. The inclusion and special educational needs policy is also in accordance with the East Hartford Public School’s Board of Education policy 5145.4, 5145.4a, and 5145.4b. All staff at Sunset Ridge Middle School and CIBA are involved in the development of the inclusion and special educational needs policy and will agree to uphold it. SR/CIBA recognize that staff will need specialized skills and knowledge in the areas of inclusion, differentiation, and intervention in order to implement this policy and the procedures that are outlined. Based on staffs’ roles, the appropriate professional development will be provided as needed. All staff are responsible to ensure that the inclusion and special educational needs policy is a working document, that it is followed and reflected upon.

Appendix A: SRBI Triangle

