

Barack H. Obama Elementary School
Inclusion Policy (*revised 6/2023*)

Introduction

Barack H. Obama Elementary School (the school) understands that all learners have different characteristics and needs to consider as they strive to meet and/or exceed their academic and non-academic potential. We apply approaches and support systems to address the individual needs and varied learning styles of students. Our goal is to seamlessly provide access and inclusion practices services so all students have every opportunity to be successful in the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP). In recognizing the diversity of our collective learning community, we support the development of internationally minded people.

Purpose

The school's inclusion policy guides our practice:

- To maintain open access to the Primary Years Programme for all students
- To validate and enhance the efforts of our learning community to meet the educational needs of all students
- To define the structures, systems, and resources needed to support all students
- To define the roles, rights and shared responsibilities of community stakeholders

Philosophy

In alignment with the International Baccalaureate Organization, the school believes in “an inclusive approach to education that is designed to remove or reduce barriers so that every student can fully participate in, and develop through” engagement in the PYP (Access and inclusion policy, IBO, 2022). Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers to learning. In this process, access refers to the provision of equitable educational opportunities for all students in all aspects of school life by making space and provisions for the characteristics each student brings. Access and inclusion are school-wide approaches involving change and a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support, and problem-solving.

In our learning community all students have equitable access to the IB PYP elements, the units of inquiry, and available resources. All school leaders and staff are involved in enhancing access and inclusion in the learning community. Our commitment to access, inclusion, and equity for all supports the staff in removing barriers for students and promotes the whole child development described in the school's mission statement.

Inclusion Practices

Students at the school are taught by dedicated, highly-qualified, and caring teachers who are committed to meeting student needs across the school context. The teachers are equipped to serve students of any ability level through professional development, collaborative structures with school and district staff, and support external resources. A team approach is used to identify, evaluate, and provide the best plan of instruction possible for students at any ability level. Students are supported emotionally, socially, behaviorally, and academically by the classroom teachers, special subject teachers (music, Spanish, library/media), counselor, interventionist, gifted education teacher, and exceptional education specialists.

Agency

Students at any ability level are encouraged to have agency over their learning and take action for their work, behavior, and relationships at the school. Student agency empowers the learner to actively participate in their learning experience. In the classroom, students are given opportunities for ownership as part of the learning community with resources from teachers and peers. Students are given time and support to engage with their learning and understanding in more than one way so that they can advocate for their needs and inquiries.

Differentiation

Differentiation and collaboration are important for student success. Differentiation is seen as the process of identifying, with each learner, the most effective strategies for meeting grade level expectations and student specific goals. With collaboration and support from staff and peers, successful connections can be made to the units, the inquiry, and the concepts being taught. All students have a right to access the programme and its components in all classroom settings. Growth for all students is prioritized through dynamic groupings within classrooms, tiered lessons targeting students' strengths and areas of need, and analysis of assessments data. Targeted instruction, open-ended learning engagements, and materials are provided at all levels of student readiness. Resources, accommodations, and modifications are provided to students based on their needs documented in their MTSS, 504, and IEP plans (See the intervention and exceptional education services sections for explanations of these plans.)

Intervention

Access to intervention services is provided for struggling students using the universal screening process, classroom performance, and teacher input. District required policies and procedures are followed to identify and provide students with support to be successful.

We use the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework to identify and serve students who require additional academic and/or behavioral support. This framework includes support for students, teachers, and parents. At the school level, the Teacher Support Team (TST) implements the MTSS framework. The school principal, interventionist, the counselor, the

classroom teacher, and teacher representatives (one from grades K-2 and one from grades 3-5) are all members of the TST. This team brainstorms, selects strategies, identifies resources for teachers and/or the interventionist to implement that are specific to each student referred. Depending on the level of support needed by the student, the intervention may be implemented in the classroom or with the interventionist in a 1:1 or small group setting. Data is tracked at regular intervals to determine if the intervention is working and make adjustments.

Exceptional education services

If student growth targets are not met after multiple intervention cycles through the MTSS framework, he/she is referred to the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) at the district level. MET reviews student classroom performance data and intervention results to determine next steps for additional support. This may include continuing interventions at the school level or further evaluation for exceptional education services. Students may be determined eligible for a 504 plan or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to meet their needs. District staffing plans do not place any full-time exceptional education service providers at the school. The nature of an individual student's specific 504 plan or IEP will determine if the appropriate services can be made available at the school or if the home school offers the least restrictive environment.

Gifted education services

The school provides gifted education services in grades 2-5 to students identified as intellectually gifted. In the Jackson Public School district these services are collectively referred to as Open Doors. The Open Doors program aims to identify and serve gifted students in a uniquely qualitatively differentiated program not available in the regular classroom; district required policies and procedures are followed to identify students for gifted education services. State regulations require that gifted education programs must be "in addition to and different from" the regular program of instruction. There is close alignment among PYP elements (e.g., the attributes of the learner profile, conceptual underpinnings, and approaches to learning skills) and the Mississippi Department of Education Outcomes for Intellectually Gifted Education Programs. While all teachers at the school collaborate to meet the needs of all students, collaboration between homeroom teachers and the gifted education teacher ensures students receiving gifted services outside the general classroom are engaged in learning experiences connected to the grade level program of inquiry.

Social, Emotional, and Physical Wellbeing Supports

Learning and skill development with regard to social, emotional, and physical wellbeing is addressed for all students in all school settings using district provided resources. These supports include teacher professional development on best practices, an online learning platform prioritizing student social-emotional skill development, the school's Positive Behavior

Intervention and Supports (PBIS) plan, and collaboration with the school counselor to meet individual and/or classroom community needs. The school's counseling program includes weekly counselor facilitated learning experiences in all grade level classrooms, student selected small group counseling sessions, and one-on-one counseling through student self-referrals as well as teacher and/or parent referrals. The school community completes annual activities to promote a respectful, safe, and equitable environment and maintain the No Place for Hate designation from the Anti-Defamation League. Teachers use brain breaks, recess, physical education resources, and school facilities to support all facets of wellbeing.

Local, State, and Federal Requirements

In addition to supporting inclusion and access through school based practices and ongoing reflection, the school follows all district, state, and federal requirements related to access and inclusion.

Inclusion Policy Review

The inclusion policy will be reviewed every two years in the first semester of the school year. During the review period, updates to IBO programme documentation, district policies and procedures, and state requirements are reviewed, and all stakeholders are invited to provide feedback. The pedagogical leadership team considers all inputs and revises the policy as appropriate.

The policy is highlighted each spring to promote continued awareness for students, parents, staff, and other community members. The inclusion policy can be accessed digitally on the school website and in print in the library/media center.

Last revised - June 2023