

## Special Educational Needs Policy

### Mission Statement

Piedmont exists to inspire in its students a passion for learning and a commitment to personal integrity and academic excellence. Students demonstrate self-confidence and creativity, are open-minded and inquisitive, and display a sense of social responsibility and global awareness.

### Philosophy

Piedmont Middle School is committed to serving its exceptional children. As a diverse school that celebrates both individual and cultural differences, we believe exceptional children are capable of making valuable contributions in our classrooms. Piedmont endeavors to recognize each student's learning style, strengths, and interests to provide top-notch differentiated instruction.

### Definition

Exceptional children are defined as those students whose academic success and/or functional performance in school are adversely affected by their disabilities in one of the following categories: mental retardation, hearing impairment, speech or language impairment, visual impairment, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism spectrum, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities.

### Responsibilities

Piedmont's administration, teachers, and support staff recognize that their responsibilities for educating exceptional children include, but are not limited to:

- holding exceptional children to high expectations
- teaching exceptional children rigorous content through differentiated instruction
- following exceptional children's Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and all federal, state, and district mandated legislation
- ensuring that exceptional children receive the services they need to succeed
- recognizing exceptional children's strengths in the classroom
- immediately notifying the exceptional children teacher of initial referrals
- communicating openly and frequently with the exceptional children teacher to ensure that each child is being appropriately served and assisted in his or her quest for academic success
- making any necessary changes to exceptional children's IEPs in a timely and efficient manner, including transition plans to high school for our 8<sup>th</sup> graders
- seeking professional development opportunities to improve upon differentiated instruction techniques and research-based strategies to teach exceptional children
- preparing exceptional children to continue in the International Baccalaureate program in high school
- aiming for high growth among our exceptional children subgroup

## Services

All Piedmont students are valued as contributing members of our school community. They are provided equal access to instruction and the curriculum. For students with specific needs, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is created by a team (*the parent, a teacher, a counselor, the principal, school psychologist, and the student*) and followed to ensure their needs are met.

Our exceptional children partake in co-taught classes and/or a learning lab class where they engage in meaningful lesson participation. They are provided the same opportunities to interact with other students in class and extracurricular activities. They also have access to consultative meetings with the exceptional children teacher regarding academic progress and a host of related services, such as speech, occupational, and physical therapy.

## Curriculum

Piedmont's exceptional children follow the International Baccalaureate curriculum as well as the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The requirements to remain in good standing include successful completion of *language and literature, mathematics, sciences, individuals and societies, health and physical education, language acquisition*, an elective class, as well as participation in a designated number of community and service hours.

We are committed to providing students with disabilities with the necessary accommodations and modifications to help them succeed while maintaining our tradition of high expectations and academic rigor. These measures are intended to level the academic playing field for exceptional children. The most commonly used accommodations and modifications include extended time, modified assignments, preferential seating, marking in the book, and testing in a separate room, though others are used as well depending on the needs of the child.

Our goal is to provide comprehensive, quality education that prepares our exceptional children to be lifelong learners and active participants in their communities. To that end, we will continue to conscientiously adhere to our responsibilities and embrace exceptional children as respected and appreciated members of our student body.