



Inclusion Policy

International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Last Revised October 2021

IB Mission Statement:

The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

Jefferson Mission Statement:

Learning together to understand and improve ourselves, our futures, and our world.

Purpose

The purpose of our inclusion policy is to communicate to all our stakeholders the expectations for creating an inclusive educational environment. The philosophy, principles and structures and practices at Thomas Jefferson are designed to ensure that all students, including students with special needs, are provided with rich and rigorous IB instruction, with the supports they need to be successful in the least restrictive environment.

Philosophy

Arlington Public Schools (APS) and Jefferson Middle School in particular believe that education is open to all. One of the foundational values of APS is that “Inclusion is the belief and practice that everyone belongs, regardless of need or perceived ability, and that all are valued and contributing members of the school community.” This is our APS definition of inclusion ([on page 2 of the equity policy](#)). We practice it, in part, by recognizing and teaching with the IB Learner Profile, in particular the attributes of open-mindedness, risk-takers, communicators and caring.

According to *Learning diversity & inclusion in IB programmes*, IB has several core beliefs about inclusive education that are all shared by Jefferson’s school community. Among these are education for all is a human right. Second, every educator is an educator of all students. Third, all learners belong and experience equal opportunities to participate in and engage in quality learning. Furthermore, IB and Thomas Jefferson believes

in teaching for learning diversity. This means we affirm and practice the principles of affirming identity & building self-esteem, valuing prior knowledge, scaffolding, and extending learning. In addition, we are committed to providing professional development for all teachers in inclusive educational practices.

Our belief in excellence and equity also anchor us as an inclusive school. APS has a dedicated office to excellence and equity, which has the mission to “advance high expectations, facilitate equitable access, and remedy opportunity gaps for Black and Latino students, as well as those from other historically marginalized communities.” APS, adopted a new [equity policy in August 2020](#). It defines equity as, “Eliminate opportunity gaps and achieve excellence by providing access to schools, resources, and learning opportunities according to each student’s unique needs.”

We want to ensure that all of our students, regardless of background or needs experience success in their educational journey. In order to meet this goal the school community believes in the following rights and responsibilities.

Teachers will:

- [Differentiate or personalize instruction based on student need](#) (additional strategies [here](#))
- Read, understand and implement student IEPs, 504 and/or individualized plans with fidelity
- Participate in professional development opportunities to remove barriers to learning
- Measure and report student growth toward individual goals
- Foster positive relationships with students (check-ins during TA, student-conference).

Students should:

- Actively participate in learning activities
- Self-advocate and take advantage of learning supports and accommodations (IEP and 504 accommodations, study hall, TAs, TA Flex)
- Understand their individual learning goals and give feedback about these goals (co-creation, achievability).

Parents/Guardians should:

- Actively participate in their student’s progress on their learning goals
- Read and understand student IEPs, 504 and/or individualized plans
- Collaborate with school staff to foster a positive learning environment for students.

Identification of Students with Disabilities (Child Find)

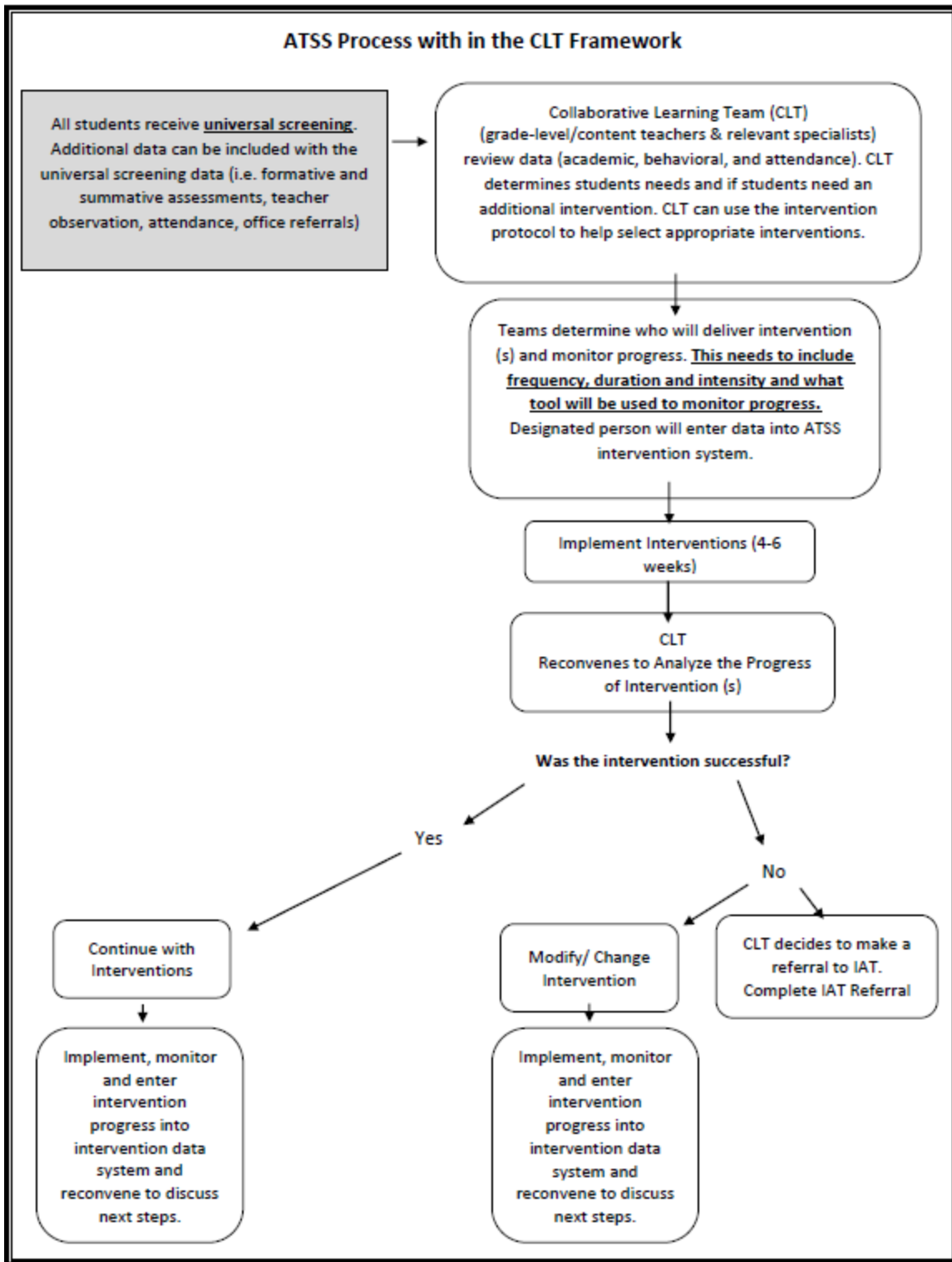
Thomas Jefferson offers a continuum of support for students to ensure their success in both the general and special education environments. First, in our [unit planner template](#), we include links to strategies and resources to support any students struggling to access the written curriculum. The specific strategies then are documented in unit plans and linked to our school-wide [IB MYP subject overview](#).

We utilize the Arlington Tiered Support System (ATSS) for all of our students. According to Arlington Public Schools (APS) [Office of Student Services](#), “The Virginia Department of Education defines a Tiered System of Support as a framework and philosophy that provides resources and supports to help every student reach success in academics and behavior. It begins with systemic change at the division, school and classroom level that utilizes evidence-based, system-wide practices to provide a quick response to academic and behavioral needs. These practices include frequent progress monitoring that enable educators to make sound, data-based instructional decisions for students.”

Students who are experiencing academic and/or behavioral difficulties may not have a disability or require special education services. Thomas Jefferson is committed to providing robust Response to Intervention (RTI) support in the general education classroom. To that end, a remediation and enrichment block, Yellow Jacket Period (YJP), was designed to provide all students with either academic support or extension for one half hour,

four days per week. YJP classes range from math/reading support, to developing Approaches to Learning Skills like self-management, organizational help, decision making, to coding, global issues and robotics classes. Students are selected for YJP classes through collaborative learning teams (CLTs) and grade level teams based on data driven inquiries into student achievement and well-being.

If a student continues to have difficulty following extensive intervention and progress monitoring, Thomas Jefferson staff may make a referral to the student support committee. The purpose of the student support committee is to problem solve next steps that the school should take to support the student. Committee members consist of parents, classroom teachers, SPED teachers, administrators (LEA), school psychologist, social worker, school counselor and the student support coordinator. At the meeting, members define the area of concern, discuss why the problem is happening, and make a decision on next steps to address the concern. There are three possible outcomes of this meeting. They are: referral for special education eligibility testing, referral for 504 Screening and Eligibility, and, finally, the development of an intervention plan that more specifically and intensely addresses the concern.



Arlington Public Schools (APS) and Thomas Jefferson Middle School provides a continuum of services for students with disabilities that are found eligible to receive special education services. Identifying a student as eligible for special education services is a carefully managed process guided by State and Federal regulations, as well as APS Special Education policies and procedures (25 4.4). Evaluations required to make this determination are completed only with parent/guardian permission.

School-based student support committees review available information regarding students who are experiencing problems that adversely affect their educational performance. Students suspected of having a disability are referred for evaluation. An eligibility committee at the student's school reviews assessment data

from school-based evaluations as well as any information provided by parents to determine if the student has a disability which requires special education services. When a student is found eligible for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed with the participation of the school staff, the parents/guardians, and the student (when appropriate). An IEP is a statement of the special education and related services that will be provided to the student, which is updated at least annually throughout a student's eligibility for special education.

If a child does not qualify for special education services, but has a documented disability, the student may receive support under Section 504 which covers a broader population than the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (Special Education). A qualified individual under Section 504 is any person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

1. "Physical or mental impairment" means (a) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory including speech organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic skin, and endocrine, or (b) any mental or psychological disorder such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, specific learning disability, attention disorders, mood disorders or learning disabilities (this list is not exhaustive).
2. "Has a record of such an impairment" means has a history of, or has been misclassified as having, a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
3. "Is regarded as having an impairment" means (a) has a physical or mental impairment that does not substantially limit major life activities, but is treated by a recipient as constituting such limitation, (b) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits major life activities only as a result of the attitudes of others toward such impairment; or (c) has none of the impairments defined in section one above, but is treated by a recipient as having such an impairment.

"Major life activities" include functions such as: caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and working (this list is not exhaustive).

The goal of 504 plans is for students to be educated in regular classrooms along with the services, accommodations, or educational aids they might need.

Special Education Model

Jefferson offers a continuum of services and placements for students with disabilities. To the greatest extent possible and in accordance with the requirements for Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), SWD are educated with their non-disabled peers. Students who need more specialized instruction, however, can be educated in any combination of inclusion, co-taught, or self-contained classroom settings.

All Jefferson students are MYP students. They have access to the written, taught and assessed curriculum:

- **IB learner profile** embodies characteristics inquirers, open-minded, caring, communicators, risk-takers, principled, knowledgeable, thinkers, balanced, reflective, that all our students must develop in order to become lifelong learners and active global citizens capable of achieving personal success and making

the world a better place.

- **Approaches to learning skills**, (transferable skills and work habits) are necessary for academic and for life-long success. Approaches to learning skills are developed for all students, and some in particular may align with students IEP goals.
- **Criterion-referenced assessments and rubrics** measure students' performance against standards which can include Virginia Standards of Learning, standards-based IEP goals, and MYP objectives. All students are assessed using IB rubrics, though accommodations must be made in order for all students to have access to the highest levels. The data derived from these assessments drive instruction and encourage students to become active participants in their learning.
- **Service as Action**, a powerful and challenging concept for many middle school students, teaches students to consider the needs of others.
- **Global Contexts**, used as contexts for learning experiences and assessments, make learning interesting and engaging for all students. Thus, students better retain what they have learned.
- **The Community Project**, along with existing culminating community based activities allows students to exercise the skills acquired in their courses through the development of a project based on personal interests. All students are expected to complete a community project.

The full range of services and settings offered for students with special needs at Thomas Jefferson Middle:

- Co-taught content classrooms
- Self-contained classrooms
- Speech Language services
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Counseling services
- Hearing Services
- Vision Services

Monitoring Student Success

The case manager is primarily responsible for monitoring student success on their goals as outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). They do this by providing written feedback to parents with respect to progress made on established goals. Goal updates are given at least once every 4.5 weeks, usually in conjunction with interim and quarterly report cards. The case manager also monitors the implementation of the IEP and acts as a liaison between general education and special education teachers.

Collaborative Planning

Collaborative planning is at the core of how we teach at Jefferson. It is essential that special needs teachers plan with general classroom teachers. To the greatest extent possible we work to find common planning time for all teachers of the same grade level planning. Teachers meet to plan instruction with IB unit planners and together develop concepts, global context explorations, statements of inquiry, inquiry questions, summative assessments, approaches to learning skills and differentiated learning activities.

In our unit planner template, we include [links to documents that include lists of specific strategies](#) to deal with dozens of special needs. Regardless of whether a student is formally identified, having this list of strategies is important for teachers to have easy access to.

In our co-taught classrooms, we believe it is imperative that both teachers are viewed as a teacher. Therefore co-teachers are expected to plan, teach and assess. We have made distinct, research-based models of co-teaching linked in the unit plan. In some classes, we also have teaching assistants to help students who need support to work more closely with another adult.

During special education evaluations all of the student's teachers, both general education and special education teachers, collaborate to develop a narrative about the student. The teacher narrative is developed to address the student's academic and behavioral strengths and weaknesses. Teachers aim to include strategies that remove barriers to learning. During the special education evaluation meetings, the general education teacher takes responsibility for addressing the narrative and addressing the content of the narrative.

Conclusion

Thomas Jefferson staff are committed to providing appropriate and comprehensive support to all students. We believe strongly in inclusive instruction and assessment in the least restrictive environment. We use data to inform our decisions regarding what supports students need and strive to ensure that all students have access to higher level classes and to experience at least some success in their educational journey.

Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was written in 2018 by a variety of teachers and the IB Coordinator. It was shared with the Inclusion department first for revision and review. Then it was shared with the school leadership team. The draft Inclusion policy was sent to all teachers for their feedback. Our new head of student support also thoroughly reviewed and revised this policy. After receiving that input, the policy was adopted by the school leadership team. It will be reviewed annually every September by the IB Committee and approved every October by the leadership team.