



Inclusion Policy

John F. Kennedy Middle School

Suncoast High School

School Profile

Suncoast High School Is a magnet school of choice located in an urban fringe community, Riviera Beach, in Palm Beach County, Florida. Since 1989, Suncoast has maintained four magnet programs; Computer Science (CS), Innovative Interactive Technology (IIT), International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB), and Math, Science, and Engineering (MSE). In 2010, a new Suncoast campus was built to create a tri-campus International Baccalaureate continuum near Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School-- Primary Years Programme (PYP) and John F. Kennedy Middle School- Middle Years Programme (MYP), The campuses are fully accessible to special needs students with disabilities.

John F. Kennedy Middle School, situated in the urban community of Riviera Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, has been a cornerstone of education since its establishment in 1963. With deep roots in the community, the school fosters a strong connection with its alumni who frequently return to contribute to its continued success. John F. Kennedy is proud to host three flourishing magnet programs, specializing in International Baccalaureate, Pre-Information Technology, and Pre-Culinary Arts. Additionally, the school is fully committed to inclusivity, ensuring that its campuses are accessible to students with special needs and disabilities.

IB students are accepted into the 9th grade at Suncoast with a GPA of 3.0 as the only prerequisite to begin the MYP program and prepare for the Diploma Programme. All students in grades 9 and 10 (Year 4 and 5) participate in the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) in the event they wish to transfer or add the Diploma Programme to their field of concentration in grade 11. During the MYP years, students and teachers are acclimated to the IB assessment ideology which includes subject area rubrics, external moderation of subjects, and oral presentations.

Mission and Values

The mission of both schools is to provide a challenging, innovative program to a diverse student population, empowering each individual to successfully compete in and contribute to the global society, while maintaining a safe school environment. In alignment with the IB philosophy on inclusion, both schools embrace the concept of diversity in recognizing the ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and learning style differences of our students. Special needs students are challenged to follow their strengths and build up their weaknesses through participation in the Middle Years Programme.

In addition, the state of Florida adopted a teaching growth model/evaluation system that fosters teachers creating new strategies to address unique student needs. Faculty members strive to integrate international mindedness and the learner profile attributes into student lessons while using differentiation strategies to address unique student needs. Teachers model learner profile attributes and encourage students to demonstrate these behaviors in the classroom as well as in service learning projects and clubs/organizations. Teachers are required to monitor student academic progress throughout lessons in the classroom.

Vision on Inclusion

The mission of the two schools is to provide a challenging, innovative program to a diverse student population, empowering each individual to successfully compete in and contribute to the global society, while maintaining a safe school environment. In alignment with the IB philosophy on inclusion, both schools embrace the concept of diversity in recognizing the ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and learning style differences of our students. Students with special needs are challenged to follow their strengths and build upon their weaknesses through full participation in the Middle Years Programme. Suncoast and JFK strive to integrate international mindedness and the learner profile attributes within student lessons while using differentiation strategies to address unique student needs.

Practices and Procedures

Students are seen as individuals with goals and aspirations reflected in the variety of academic programs that exist in each school. Thus, professional development opportunities and the IB philosophy of inclusion are shared with all faculty members to ensure that teaching and learning practices are implemented to serve a diverse student population. In addition, special needs students receive the specific accommodations prescribed for their needs during state, national, and international exams. The IB Coordinator, school testing coordinator, and proctors are made aware of the specific accommodations for special needs students to insure fidelity of implementation.

The Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Departments includes ESE Coordinator, support facilitators, and school administrators to monitor educational services for students with special needs. In accordance with state and federal guidelines, students with special needs may be entitled to receive specific accommodations in the classroom and/or during assessments as deemed appropriate for their needs. Federal law requires that, upon parental request and with medical documentation, a meeting is held with parents, student, ESE staff, administration, teachers, school psychologist, speech/language pathologist, sign language interpreter and deaf/hard of hearing teacher (as needed) to discuss and record specific accommodations outlined for the student, as well as annually to evaluate the success of those accommodations.

The accommodations are recorded on a 504 plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP), depending on the student's need. Students with special needs may use assistive technologies, word processors for essay exams, readers, frequent breaks or additional time for assignments and assessments as prescribed on 504 plans or IEPs. Students' teachers are given copies of 504 plans or IEPs to implement the accommodations outlined for classroom participation and/or assessment.

Students with special needs are protected under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and have a right to receive education in the least restrictive environment. The Exceptional Student Education Department works closely with teachers in developing an understanding of each student's needs and to ensure that teachers understand how the specific accommodations are aligned with the student's needs.

School Support and Resources

Suncoast students complete a Learning Styles Inventory survey through the Counseling Services Department to gain a better understanding of themselves as learners. With this information, students can make modifications in their study habits and learning strategies to strive for success in the classroom.

The completion of an IB Learner Profile survey is a requirement for John F. Kennedy students, offering insights into their potential strengths. This survey facilitates a more comprehensive understanding by the school of the individual needs, strengths, and weaknesses of its students, allowing targeted support to be provided where necessary.

Teachers from both schools attend district and state workshops and receive on-campus professional development in the areas of international mindedness, learner profile, global contexts in unit planning, and differentiation for classroom implementation.

Administrators strive for fidelity of implementation with these ideals as teachers progress through the state adopted teacher growth model/evaluation system.

Both schools have access to school district personnel that specialize in Exceptional Student Education practices, procedural safeguards, test evaluations, parent conferences, and legal advice. The schools receive weekly visitations from an assigned district

speech/language pathologist and a school psychologist. The staff of the ESE departments consists of support facilitators that attend specific classes with assigned students with special needs and provide support according to the students' IEP. In addition, sign language interpreters, one-on-one paraprofessionals, and deaf/hard of hearing lead teachers are also at the schools working with assigned students, as needed.

The school district allocates funds to the schools to hire and train special needs support staff based upon the number of enrolled students diagnosed with disabilities. Therefore, the ESE department has limited funding for support facilitation services. The ESE department does not screen or evaluate students for disabilities; this matter is handled at the district level by school psychologists, by parents, or based on a Child Study Team request. Thus, faculty, administrators, school counselors, and teachers with students with special needs work together to follow and monitor the 504 and IEP plans.

Students with special needs, depending on their disability, require skills in organization, executive decision-making, information processing, cognitive processing, and language processing to function in the high school classroom. In addition to support facilitation in the high school classroom, students also receive individualized assistance during the daily 40-minute lunch period from ESE support facilitators in the aforementioned areas. Speech and language impaired students receive support services during elective class periods from the speech/language pathologist.

Stakeholders

The Special Needs Policy is shared with faculty, parents, students, and the school district, on our schools' websites, during parent meetings, and at Open House events. Also, our policy articulates the schools' stance on providing inclusive educational services. These stakeholders are made aware of the inclusion policy to ensure that all students take full advantage of the academic programs offered. The school district/enrollment policy for magnet schools of choice, encourages applications from students with special needs and does not permit test scores, teacher recommendations, or student conduct records to eliminate eligible students from the applicant pool.

Communication

The ESE department for both Suncoast and John F. Kennedy maintains parent communication through emails, phone conferences, parent meetings, and quarterly reports to parents. The ESE Coordinator facilitates parent meetings while the school psychologist interprets psychological evaluations and the speech/language pathologist interprets language evaluations of students. In 504 and IEP meetings, accommodations for special needs students are discussed, with teachers present to support student success in the classroom. The Coordinator applies to the IB, on behalf of the student, for accommodations in the classroom and/or for internal and external examinations, as necessary.

When students are in transition from middle to high school, a transition IEP meeting is conducted, prior to arriving at high school, to allow a district transition specialist to provide parents with information about success in high school. In transition to college, a transition specialist is available to provide information to parents of students with special needs, about career and college preparation. Students are invited to use their IEP or 504 plans to apply at the Office of Civil Liberties at their choice college for accommodations.

Confidentiality

Administration respects student confidentiality regarding the transmission of information about students with special needs to faculty. The ESE coordinator maintains student records in a secure location and discloses records to parents, upon written request, to teachers, or to district ESE personnel. Pertinent information about special needs students is disseminated to administrators, faculty, or test proctors with confidentiality in sealed documents or marked "confidential."

Policy Review

The Special Needs Policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure that the IB philosophy of inclusion is safeguarded and communicated to faculty, staff, administration, school counselors, students, parents, and stakeholders. The ESE department of each school will be the predominant voice in addressing how the learning needs of students with special needs should be monitored and addressed in the classroom. The responsibility of meeting the needs of special needs students rests on the shoulders of all stakeholders.

Supporting Documents

John F. Kennedy Middle School and Suncoast Community High School Special Needs Policy, 2023.

Learning diversity and inclusion in 1B

programmes, 2016. MVP: From principles

practice, 2014.