

# Lake Forest Hills Elementary Inclusion Policy

## Mission

Empowering growth through voice, choice, collaboration, and reflection.

## Vision

Inspiring a love for inquiry, deep learning, and connection in a caring, balanced environment.

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## Philosophy

Lake Forest Hills Elementary School, an International Baccalaureate PYP (Primary Years Programme), believes in developing culturally aware, well-rounded global citizens who nurture intellectual, emotional, and social growth.

As a public school in Augusta, Georgia, we welcome all students regardless of race, sex, gender, or exceptionality, fostering an inclusive environment. We believe in creating a school community that promotes understanding of diverse perspectives, enhancing creativity, innovation, and progress.

We acknowledge that students have a variety of academic and physical needs. By recognizing the diversity within our learning community, we support the development of internationally minded individuals. These needs include, but are not limited to:

- Specific Learning Disabilities
  - Language and Communication Disorders
  - Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties
  - Physical Disabilities Affecting Mobility
  - Sensory Impairments (Visual or Hearing)
  - Medical Conditions (e.g., asthma, epilepsy, diabetes)
  - Mental Health Conditions (e.g., ADHD, anxiety)
  - Gifted and Talented Students
  - English Language Learners (ELL)
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## Practice

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Early Intervention Programs (EIP), Gifted Education Plans (GEPs), English Language Learner supports (ELL), and 504 Plans provide necessary accommodations to ensure students learn in the least restrictive environment.

Students spend most of their time in general education settings with appropriate support services. Identified students receive assistance from teachers with specialized certifications through co-teaching or pull-out models. This structured approach promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion within our program and community.

Our inclusion and admission policies align with the school's mission, vision, and beliefs.

There is access to a certified resource teacher and a speech therapist as needed. Screening and testing for potential special needs students are addressed at the district level.

Resource services are individualized to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. These services are provided according to IEPs and 504 Plans. Compliance and updates to these plans are the shared responsibility of resource teachers, school administrators, counselors, and parents.

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## **Differentiation**

At Lake Forest Hills Elementary School, teachers use grouping within classrooms, tiered lessons, pre-assessments, and formative assessments to identify students' strengths and areas for targeted instruction. All students receive instruction that enables them to succeed.

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## **Stakeholders**

The following personnel are vital to the implementation of this policy:

- Board of Education Members
- Administration (Principal, Assistant Principals, Instructional Specialist, and IB Coordinators)
- Special Education Teachers and Early Intervention Teachers
- School Psychologists
- Guidance Counselors
- Student Support Team Coordinators
- General Education Teachers
- Specials Teachers (Art, P.E., and Spanish)
- Parents and Guardians
- Students

Stakeholders will become aware of this policy through professional development, and others will be informed through its publication on the school's website.

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## **Definition of Inclusion**

Lake Forest Hills Elementary School's inclusion policy ensures that all students are educated in their least restrictive environment. For most students, this begins in the general education classroom setting with a co-teaching model. Some students receive instruction in small groups according to their IEP or 504 Plan. Others may receive two periods of EIP services outside the whole group setting.

Regardless of instructional level or setting, all students participate fully in the IB PYP Programme at Lake Forest Hills Elementary School.

Lake Forest Hills Elementary supports IB's philosophy by providing access for all students, including those with special education needs, 504 Plans, and EIP. Collaborative planning and differentiated instruction are used to meet diverse learning needs and styles. Students are placed in their least restrictive environment, with most in general education settings. Those in pull-out settings also receive full access to the IB PYP Programme.

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## **The MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) Committee**

The MTSS Committee is a state-mandated, school-based intervention process that provides Tier 3 services. Its purpose is to support students and teachers in improving achievement.

The MTSS Committee includes teachers, resource personnel, administration, and, when necessary, parents and students. The team addresses learning and behavioral difficulties, including challenges related to medical conditions, behavior, or limited academic progress.

## **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

Lake Forest Hills Elementary School follows Georgia's four-tiered **Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions** to provide appropriate and effective **Response to Intervention (RTI)**. This process incorporates universal screening, targeted interventions, and a team approach to the creation, development, and implementation of services.

**Tier I and Tier II** interventions occur in the general education setting by grade-level teams. Tier II interventions are implemented in part by EIP teachers in math and literacy. Documentation from each tier is maintained to track interventions and student movement between tiers.

**Tier III** interventions and services are facilitated by the MTSS Committee. The MTSS Chairperson ensures program fidelity and that decisions are based on data and indicators of student progress.

**Tier IV** interventions and services, including Special Education (SPED), ESOL, and Gifted instruction, are provided through specialized programs.

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## Early Intervention Program (EIP)

The Early Intervention Program (EIP) serves students in grades K–5 who are at risk of not reaching or maintaining grade-level performance. It provides intervention strategies and services to remediate foundational skills necessary for academic success. EIP offers additional instructional support and resources to help students performing below grade level achieve essential academic skills.

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## Section 504

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities under Section 504. This law applies to programs receiving federal funding and ensures equal access for individuals whose physical or mental impairments substantially limit major life activities, including caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, and learning.

Schools must provide students with disabilities equal opportunities for success. Students with temporary medical conditions or disabilities may also receive 504 accommodations. These accommodations are delivered and monitored through the **Student Support Team (SST)**.

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## Gifted and Talented

The Gifted Program uses the **Resource Model**, where students are pulled out for gifted services and receive five to six segments per week of enrichment instruction. The gifted teacher collaborates with classroom teachers to ensure support within the general classroom.

To align with IB PYP standards and practices, gifted teachers have completed IB Category 1 training and work closely with the IB Coordinator and grade-level teams. Meetings occur at least once per nine-week term to align the gifted curriculum with IB aims.

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## Gifted Testing

Testing occurs in the spring using the following assessments:

- **Stanford 10** – Measures achievement
- **CogAT** – Measures mental ability
- **Torrance Test of Creative Thinking** – Measures creative ability

Additionally, the Gifted Program offers the **Talent Development Program** for high-achieving students who are close to qualifying for gifted services. These students receive enrichment to develop creativity and motivation in preparation for future testing.

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## **Confidentiality**

Lake Forest Hills Elementary School maintains strict confidentiality of student records in accordance with **Parental Rights for Special Education** guidelines. Student educational records are private. Parents may obtain copies of their child's records. School employees directly involved with a student may access records without parental permission but are obligated to maintain confidentiality. No other individuals may view student records without parental consent.

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## **Ongoing Review of the Inclusion Policy**

The pedagogical leadership team and MTSS Committee are responsible for implementing and reviewing the Inclusion Policy. Communication of the policy will extend to parents, teachers, and local stakeholders to ensure transparency and collaboration.

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**Revised: June 2025**