

What is a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan?

Massachusetts General Laws require the adoption and implementation of a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP). This plan is intended to guide principals and teachers in ensuring that all possible efforts are made to meet student needs in general education classrooms and to support teachers in analyzing and accommodating the wide range of student learning styles and needs that exist in any school. By describing in a document the accommodations, instructional supports and strategies that are available in general education, and the process for determining effective interventions for struggling learners, it is hoped that this DCAP will help support diverse learners in our schools.

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 38Q1/2

“A school district shall adopt and implement a curriculum accommodation plan to assist principals in ensuring that all efforts have been made to meet the students’ needs in regular education. The plan shall be designed to assist the regular classroom teacher in analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles of all children in the regular classroom and in providing appropriate services and support within the regular education programming, including, but not limited to, direct and systematic instruction in reading and provision of services to address the needs of children whose behavior may interfere with learning, or who do not qualify for special education services under chapter 71B. The curriculum accommodation plan shall include provisions encouraging teacher mentoring and collaboration and parental involvement.”

The Needham Public Schools DCAP has four main objectives:

- To assist general education teachers in analyzing, assessing and accommodating diverse learners
- To increase, through the DCAP’s articulation, support services and instructional delivery options available within general education settings
- To recommend instructional interventions for struggling learners
- To delineate resources available to teachers in the areas of student support, mentoring, professional development and coaching

Needham Public Schools believe and expect that all students can learn. The following statements represent this belief system:

- Students have different rates and styles of learning
- Students are diverse in their cognitive, physical, linguistic, social and emotional development
- Students differ in their ability to work and study independently
- At various times, students experience different reactions and responses to curriculum and instructional task demands
- Students require different amounts of supervision and instruction

It is with these statements in mind that this DCAP was designed. It provides an accounting of resources and accommodations available to students and classroom teachers. The DCAP provides a process that each school follows in order to support struggling learners. The DCAP includes a flow chart describing this support for struggling learners and how teachers can identify resources to support the learner.

Please note: “The law requires that no instructional support program nor any other intervention limits the right of a parent to refer a student for a special education evaluation. However, if a referral for a special education evaluation has been made and the district has asked for and received parental consent to evaluate, then evaluation information from any instructional support program should be made available to the special education Team to consider when determining if the student is eligible for special education.”

(Excerpted from “Is Special Education the Right Service? A Technical Assistance Guide”, MA DOE, March 2001)

NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

District Curriculum Accommodation Plan

General education provides a rich educational experience for all students. Needham Public Schools are committed to developing the general education classroom so that all students can find success in that learning environment. The Needham School District endeavors to make the general education classroom an appropriate placement for all students.

| Strategies | Description |
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| Assistance to general education classroom teachers to help them analyze and accommodate various students learning needs and to manage students' behavior | <p>Professional development and classroom-based supports for teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum leaders, Department Heads, Literacy, Math and Science Specialists from K-12 assist classroom teachers in problem-solving and analyzing instructional practice and student results • Building-based teacher support teams in each building convene regularly to provide instructional and behavioral intervention suggestions to teachers • Middle School Cluster Teams meet regularly to discuss student needs and behavioral and instructional strategies • Curriculum Leaders K-8 provide consultation for classroom teachers • Middle School Individual Academic Success Plans are constructed for students who have not demonstrated proficiency in MCAS or in academic • Library/Media Specialists and Technology Integration Specialists provide resources for curriculum and instruction and collaborate with classroom teachers around instruction • Guidance staff provide individual and small group social skills and issue-specific groups (divorce, new to town, sibling issues, illness/death, learning style, disability, etc.) • Grade level, department and faculty meetings • New teacher meetings, including teacher mentor program • Curriculum Study Groups and Task Forces |

| Strategies | Description |
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| <p>Support services that are available to students through the general education, including services to address the needs of students whose behavior may interfere with learning.</p> | <p>Preschool and Elementary Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Emotional Learning programs in general education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsive Classroom routines and structures. ▪ 2nd Step (K-4) skill instruction to develop strong bonds to school, to solve problems without anger and to treat others with compassion. ▪ Steps to Respect (4-5) skill instruction to teach students to recognize, refuse and report bullying. • Literacy Specialists work with individual/small groups of students for reading instruction. • Literacy Specialists provide teacher consultation for curriculum development, screening, data analysis, informal and formal assessment, demonstration teaching, and co-taught classes. • Foundations phonics instructions in K-3. Regular common assessments lead to “double dose” of instruction in the classroom as needed. • Kindergarten Literacy assessment battery established across the district. • ELL staff provides language learning instruction and support for students in academic classes. • Title I teachers provide targeted reading support in eligible schools. • Math volunteers are trained to assist elementary children in their classrooms. • Literacy Specialists help teachers to administer assessments, interpret results and design instruction to meet student needs. • Summer programs include content area remediation and literacy instruction for grades 1-2. • METCO homework club program. • METCO summer program for entering Kindergarten and grade 1 students. • Technology Resources – FASST Math; Reading programs, alpha smarts, wireless computer labs). • Behavior support available through psychologists and special education teachers. <p>Middle School Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily Advisory period with a small group of students and one teacher. • Guidance counselor – individual or group. • After-school teacher availability on regular basis. • METCO after-school programming. • Academic Success Block/Flex Block for academic support services. • MCAS mastery courses are offered after school, based on ISSP (Individualized Student Support Plan). |

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| | <p>High School Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Homeroom structure allows small cohort to meet regularly with a High School faculty member. Focused, teacher-led discussions provided around important topics. • Focused guidance group instruction for students. • After-school teacher availability. • METCO after-school programming. • MCAS mastery tutoring offered in Math and ELA. • Before and after-school teacher availability. • Personal Learning Center for academic support services for general education students • Connections Program for academic and therapeutic support services for general education students. • Round Table meetings are held monthly at NHS to exchange information on students who are in the court system in an attempt to help support them. |
| <p>Professional Development opportunities provided to increase instructional skills for all teachers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Curriculum Leaders in math, science and English/Language Arts provide individual and grade level professional development for teachers. • Annual training for new staff in “Instruction for All Students” and “Empowering Multicultural Initiatives.” • Annual training of teachers who serve on teacher support teams. • Graduate level courses on balanced literacy instruction for grades 1-5 teachers. • Training in administering the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment for grades 1-5 teachers. • Training in using the Foundations program to teach phonics and assess student learning. • Math Curriculum Leader provides coaching and Professional Development in “guided math” strategies. |
| <p>Direct instruction</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each elementary student has a daily, 2-hour literacy block where teachers provide direct instruction in reading and writing. • Each elementary student has 1 hour of direct math instruction block. • Literacy specialists assist primary grade classroom teachers with the implementation of literacy assessments and programming. • The elementary literacy, science and math curriculum leaders model reading/writing skills, science and math for teachers. • Grades 1-5 Teachers administer Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-5 teachers administer mid-year and end of year common math assessments as well as Benchmark Assessments for each unit of instruction. • Integration of test-taking skills instruction in classes. • Use of MCAS test format in classroom assessments. • Use of MCAS vocabulary in classroom instruction and assessment in individual classrooms. • Use of programs: FasstMath (gr. 3-4-5) and Study Island (grades 6-7-8) in general education classrooms for math and literacy skill instruction and practice. |
| Teacher mentoring and collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new teachers in Needham are provided a qualified mentor who has completed the Needham Mentor Program. • New teachers attend a 2 day orientation prior to the start of the year. • New teachers attend six after school mentor sessions (workshops) throughout the year. • Mentors are required to attend three mentor workshops during the school year. • Mentors meet weekly with the teacher during the first semester and biweekly for the remainder of the year to share successes, identify and address needs, and offer assistance. • Mentors share a commitment to the positive effects of a collaborative approach to improving teaching. • Grade level teams and departments meet regularly in each building. |
| Changes to the school schedule, such as additional instructional time or block scheduling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high school has a rotating schedule that includes two, 90-minute blocks each morning. • The middle school is divided into grade level houses with each house divided into four to five clusters. • Pollard Cluster teachers (math, science, English, social studies) meet every other day with the grade level administrator, guidance counselor, and other support personnel as needed to plan, coordinate, and monitor the educational progress of each child. • At the elementary level, each child receives 120 minutes of English/Language Arts and 60 minutes of math instruction daily. |
| Review of local curriculum in relation to state learning standards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Specialists and Coordinators assist principals and teachers with curriculum and instruction oversight, analysis of student achievement data, teacher assistance with curriculum modifications, curriculum resource acquisition and allocation • Each year's MCAS results are analyzed and compared to the previous year's results. • Curriculum is aligned to state standards; units are monitored and updated regularly. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum documents are available online to all staff. • Performance patterns in MCAS results are identified, including strengths and weaknesses. Short- and long-term plans for curriculum changes in each academic area and for small group and individual support are formulated based on results of the analysis. • An annual Curriculum Review Process is conducted to review an area of the curriculum and to make recommendations based on the findings. In 2009-10 the English Language Arts Curriculum was reviewed. |
| Additional staffing or consultation on academic and behavioral issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each school has at least one guidance counselor and nurse on staff. • Media teacher consults with teachers regarding resources, support for enrichment and research projects. • Occupational, Speech Therapists, Special Education Liaisons and Adapted Physical Education Teacher provide teacher consultation, classroom observation of students, informal screening for students. • School Psychologists, guidance counselors and special education liaisons are specialists in behavior observation, consultation and program development and can provide support to classroom and specialist teachers as needed. • Two of the high school counselors are dedicated to personal issues, not involved with scheduling or college placements. • The Middle School has two guidance counselors dedicated to students who need more direct support for emotional and behavioral issues. • At the middle school, the Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT) meet regularly to review student performance within each team. The teams come together to identify strategies and accommodations to assist the teacher and student. • Principals, Assistant Principals and Special Education Directors provide consultation to teachers around students struggling with academic, social, emotional and behavioral issues • Each building has a trained team of teachers who can safely de-escalate student behavior and, if necessary, restrain a student. • K-12 social and emotional learning standards have been developed and are being implemented. • Psychologists provide regular and ongoing consultation to staffs at all levels, including completion of Functional Behavior Assessments, when needed to support a student. • Each school in the district has at least one licensed social worker employed as a guidance counselor who can support students, parents and teachers. |

| Strategies | Description |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle and High School guidance counselors and teachers advise students of options and opportunities for additional instruction in areas of weakness, and of specific programs available to improve test performance. |
| Communication with parents and opportunities for parent involvement in the schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Progress Reports are issued two times a year and elementary teachers provide two parent conferences a year (minimum). • "Home Comments" are sent to all high school students who are in academic difficulty. • PowerSchool provides parents with password access to grades of middle and high school students. • Following the issuance of each report card, a letter is sent to all parents of high school students who fail a subject. • High school students receive a course verification letter in March. • Any student who is in danger of failing for the year receives a letter in the spring which includes information on summer school. • In August, all seniors receive a letter outlining their current credit situation and required subjects to be taken during their senior year. • Biennial district-wide parent survey provides input regarding parent satisfaction • Back-to-School Nights are held at all schools. • District website and Principals' and Superintendents' listserves provide newsletters and on-going information to parents. • Parent volunteer opportunities are listed in newsletters, Parent Teacher Committee newsletters, and in teacher communications. • Adult Volunteer Program through the Community Education program engages community members in meaningful volunteer opportunities in the schools. • At the elementary level, room parents and PTC's work closely with the principal and teachers to coordinate parent volunteers with the school's needs. • High School Orientation Nights for each class of parents (in the fall). • Teacher websites provide course information and student assignment information to parents. |

Instructional Support Interventions

Accommodations to the classroom instruction, student responses, teaching strategies, teaching environment or materials. This list is representative of suggested strategies and is not inclusive of all strategies that may be successful with individual students

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| Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment Strategies |
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- Arrange partner or small group instruction
- Develop student contracts or individual behavior, social or academic improvement plans
- Provide cueing and “wait time” or “think time” to encourage participation
- Provide multi-modal presentation of instruction and materials
- Repeat or re-teach concepts with a different approach
- Differentiate instruction and assignments
- Utilize alternative assessments: oral, multiple choice, computer-based, read aloud, except reading tests
- Incorporate incentives and reward systems, including student graphing of own progress
- Provide preferential seating/flexible seating arrangements
- Frequent progress monitoring and feedback to student on progress
- Instruct students in study skills, note-taking; model these skills during instruction
- Utilize technology and computer assisted instruction
- Teach students to use graphic organizers
- Provide manipulatives
- Use checklists, teacher check-ins, calendars and project organizers to break down long-term assignments
- Break down tasks into manageable steps
- Utilize peer buddy systems for study groups or homework check-ins
- Utilize homework logs and journals for homework follow-up
- Provide reference tools, web sites and textbooks for homework support
- Provide study guides
- Provide strategies to parents to support homework completion
- Allow extended time for those tests that determine a student’s knowledge and mastery of content, but not fluency in the subject area
- Provide a scribe when needed to assess student knowledge
- Allow the use of word processing for assignments and assessments

Behavioral Intervention Strategies

- Post classroom expectations in view of all students
- Classroom interventions by guidance counselor
- Arrange seating to prevent behavioral difficulties
- Develop student contracts or individual behavior improvement plans
- Utilize charts and graphs to monitor expectations
- Adjust classroom management strategies
- Contact parents/facilitate parent support/strategies and communication
- Consult with school psychologist, guidance counselor, special needs staff
- Include movement breaks and energizers during instructional periods
- Incorporate stress-release activities
- Remove distractions

Organizational Strategies

- Provide daily schedule and agenda
- Utilize flexible groups
- Utilize contract learning
- Implement a frequent progress monitoring system with students
- Use cooperative learning strategies
- Provide strategies to parents
- Choose and use graphic organizers with students