



Peoria Academy Inclusion Policy

Peoria Academy Mission Statement

Peoria Academy is a diverse community of students, parents, and educators working together to provide a rigorous educational experience. Using progressive techniques that nurture the whole child, our independent school fosters intrinsic motivation, resilience, and creativity.

Purpose:

The purpose of Peoria Academy's approach to inclusion generally is to ensure a safe, respectful, engaging learning environment that allows all students to be both challenged and successful. Furthermore, this work is done in order to ensure full compliance with state and national requirements for meeting the needs of all students including the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (2008) and the *Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act* (2004).

Statement of Philosophy: *Building a culture of inclusion*

Our philosophy of inclusion is driven by the aspirations that every student at Peoria Academy is challenged, and every student at Peoria Academy feels success. This supports our aim that all Peoria Academy students are caring, inquisitive, and knowledgeable learners. Every child is an individual with their own innate curiosity and desire to learn and grow. They have their own interests and learning styles, as they progress at their own pace. We therefore take considerable time tailoring our educational program to each individual learner. We meet every student where they are and move them forward.

Peoria Academy recognizes that certain students may need additional support to assist in their learning. Our teachers scaffold and differentiate learning methodologies within the classroom to accommodate these learning differences. We understand that some students need more support outside of the classroom and through specialized instruction. We also believe a successful inclusive program supports and benefits all students. We support our students with physical, emotional, behavioral, and learning differences through our Individual Academic Plans (IAPs).

To promote this inclusive and learner-centered environment, we ensure that all students receive the resources, guidance, and accommodations necessary to promote engagement and achievement at their own highest level. These inclusive practices are supported by general education/homeroom teachers, specialists, and advisors. An essential component of these inclusive arrangements are our formal accommodations, which are provided for students with identified assessment needs. In addition, Peoria Academy teachers differentiate learning experiences for all students based on interests, abilities, and previous learning experiences among other considerations.

Peoria Academy faculty and staff maintain a high degree of collegiality and professionalism. Collaboration between teachers, support teams, students, parents, and administrators is essential in our



effort to empower all learners to achieve their highest potential. All information concerning a student with disabilities is confidential and may not be discussed with anyone except those who have a legitimate educational interest in the student.

District and School-Based Services Provided:

As a private independent school located within the Dunlap School District (DSD), all students at Peoria Academy are eligible to access support services provided by DSD. Supports include: social worker, counseling, school psychology, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, vision and hearing aids, and occupational therapy.

With regards to school-based support, the Principal works in direct consultation with faculty to determine the level of accommodation that the school can provide for students with special needs. In order to receive accommodations, evaluations may be required. Additionally, external remediation may be provided at a district level as detailed above.

Individual Accommodation Plans (IAP) are generated through a review process including the Principal, faculty, parents and - on a case by case basis - outside professionals. IAPs are updated annually and stored on a faculty Google Drive in order for all teachers to have access to and knowledge of required accommodations.

While IAPs vary based on the types of accommodations a specific student may benefit from, they typically contain accommodations along the lines of: outlines of a student's current academic capabilities and needs, accommodations to be provided inside the classroom, outside supports to be provided, medications, eligibility for additional time on assessments, types and degree of services to be provided, and general considerations to promote the least restrictive, most enriching environment for each individual student.

The school and parents/guardians have responsibilities for ensuring the proper implementation of the district and school-based accommodations and services outlined above. The school's responsibilities include: providing guidance to prospective families to ensure they will be well supported by educational programming at Peoria Academy, regular faculty participation to generate, communicate and review IAPs and district provided service, and collaborative work between administration, faculty and families to ensure that all plans support the success of each student. Parent/guardian responsibilities include providing all required documentation to the district and school, responding to requests for information in a timely manner, and participating in the IAP and district-based accommodation processes as required.

Rights and Responsibilities of the Learning Community

Every student has the right to a *Free and Appropriate Education* (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. It is the firm belief of Peoria Academy that every student deserves an educational environment that helps them not only reach their potential, but to exceed it.



Responsibilities of Students, Teachers, and Parents

All members of the Peoria Academy learning community appreciate the differences among students which contribute to the learning environment. Students are encouraged to be agents of their own learning and to advocate for their own needs. All staff members receive confidentiality training in accordance with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* of 1974. Parent volunteers and substitute teachers are held to confidentiality standards.

Inclusion Essential Agreements

- We provide a learning environment that is adaptable and appropriate so all students can learn.
- We will collaborate with all members of the learning community to ensure all students have equal access to the curriculum.
- We will utilize the expertise of all members of the learning community as a resource for suggestions and assistance with student educational plans.
- Administrators collaborate with classroom teachers to share documentation and educational plans.
- We will implement interventions with fidelity and will document accommodations.
- We will maintain student confidentiality. As professionals, we will discuss student issues only with others who have an educational need to know.
- We will maintain the security of student records and educational plans.
- We will deepen our understanding of the complexity of varying abilities through personal research, attending conferences, and sharing expertise and experiences in staff meetings.
- We will work collaboratively to ensure compliance with all federal and state guidelines and requirements.

Review process and Policy Communication

Each spring, representatives from the lower and middle school will form a committee to review the current Inclusion Policy. The Inclusion Policy will be reviewed by a team constituted of the following members:

- Lower & Middle School teacher representatives
- Lower School Coordinator
- Middle School Coordinator
- Principal

At the commencement of each school year, the coordinators will facilitate reflection on the policy and agreements with all teaching staff to ensure the policy is a working document evident in planning, teaching, and assessment. The Inclusion Policy will be incorporated into the five-year program review for both the lower and middle school programs. Amendments to the policy will be made annually or as needed based on stakeholder feedback. The document is distributed to faculty and posted on the school



website.

The Inclusion Policy is best understood in connection with other key program documents, links to which are publicly available at peoriaacademy.org:

- Assessment Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Language Policy

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