

# Harlem Village Academies High Inclusion Policy

The mission of the Harlem Village Academies Network Inclusion Department is to support the highest quality core instruction through meaningful assessment, early intervention, and individualized programming to meet the needs of students with disabilities ensuring that they reach their fullest potential. We believe that students with disabilities will achieve their fullest potential when they have access to the instruction and community of learners in general education.

As part of its mission, the teachers, staff, students, and community of Harlem Village Academies High are dedicated to fostering a culturally-responsive environment where students are respected as individuals; where student differences are celebrated and valued.

As a fundamental element of our mission is to help students become responsible, ethical, creative, and compassionate members of society, we must ensure that the philosophies and principles of the IB program continue to serve all students – and that access and engagement in learning is increased by identifying and removing barriers to the IB Program at HVAH. Because of this, HVAH is proud to offer an “IB For All” program, allowing students – regardless of their inclusion needs – to enroll in the Full IB Diploma Programme.

We are, without question, exceptionally supportive of the diversity of our student population – and of their learning needs. Our teacher support model, Scope and Sequence template for all courses, and Lesson Plan template explicitly includes indicators and standards on inclusion, differentiated instruction, and supporting the learning needs of each student, as individuals. Further, we support the following practices in the IBO’s Programme Standards and Practices (2018):

- **Student support 2:** The school identifies and provides appropriate learning support.
- **Culture 1:** The school secures access to an IB education for the broadest possible range of students.
- **Culture 2:** The school implements, communicates and regularly reviews an inclusion policy that creates cultures that support all students to reach their full potential.

## SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

As a charter school based in New York State (USA), HVAH is guided by both local and national laws that ensure that the policies and procedures in place treat all students equally, and that we support points of access for all students to find success in the IB program.

Special education and related services are provided to children with disabilities who are eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Harlem Village Academy network of schools follows the federal guidelines of providing a variety of services and placement continuum options. Services are provided to students with severe/profound

levels of disabilities who are nonverbal and/or are medically fragile (at the elementary level); to students with moderate levels of disabilities who may have cognitive deficits or significant behavioral issues; and to students with mild levels of disabilities who may be struggling in one or more academic areas. All types of services and placement settings are determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team with input from the parent and (if possible) the child. Working together as a team (parents and school personnel), we challenge each student based on their individual levels of functioning and performance to be successful in our school, home and community.

Students who have a medically-diagnosed need for a special accommodation or individual educational plan are granted additional support in a variety of ways. In general terms, the network provides services to students in elementary, middle and high school with developmental disabilities.

Teachers are required, by law, to follow the plans and provide accommodations to these students, typically served by what is locally referred to as a "504 Plan" or an "IEP." These plans allow specific and explicit accommodations to best serve their ability to find success in the classroom. These plans are directly linked to teaching and learning, assessment, and language policies, as they are required to be followed, by law.

Frequently, these special accommodations allow students to seek additional time to complete assignments, preferential seating, the use of a word processor for exams or – in specific cases – the use of an aide throughout the day, paid for by the State or School. These policies are consistent with IB philosophy and practices, and Inclusive Access Arrangements are requested to provide accommodations during IB exams, as needed.

In addition to student accommodations, HVAH hosts an Inclusion Department, with a full-time Special Education Coordinator and 3 full-time teaching staff, to support additional instruction for a select group of students.

### **SFA and ASSESSMENT**

The HVAH Student and Family Affairs Team (SFA) is a multidisciplinary team of staff who meet weekly to reflect on the needs of students - both with and without IEPs - who struggle academically and/or socio-emotionally. The team determines what educational or emotional supports might be necessary for individual students to reach success. Specifically, our SFA team treats incoming quantitative assessment data (such as the WISC or the New York State English Language Arts and Math assessments) as the starting point for conversations about supporting the needs of our students. When evaluating qualitative assessment data (such as teacher referrals, classroom observations or parent communication) our SFA team works to not lose sight of the student; we use an iterative process to ensure that the supports provided are timely, appropriate, and move the student forward academically.

## **SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT**

The Harlem Village Academies Network has built an extensive, month-long professional development focus directly into teacher contracts, and into the academic year. Beginning at the start of August – and going through the first day of school – teachers work for eight hours a day on a wide-ranging array of modules, dealing with everything from IB Assessments, to Approaches to Teaching and Learning, to TOK Across the Disciplines.

In addition, during the school year, teachers are released for half-days once per week to engage in significant professional, planned development days. On many occasions, our school's Inclusion staff creates specific workshops related to working with students with special needs. These workshops often include the formation of Child Study Teams, which allow entire grade-level teams to share information about students who may need additional support, observe student progress in response to specific interventions, and request additional support from the Inclusion team if needed.

## **RESOURCES**

Our school's leadership team includes members of our Student and Families Affairs (SFA) team, including the Special Education Coordinator. This ensures that our focus - as leaders - is on the full life of the student.

Within the HVA network, HVAH staff has access to Inclusion experts; within HVAH, staff can access our Special Education Coordinator, Social Worker, and Inclusion professionals who assist students with special needs and co-teach with our general education teachers. The network collaborates with the Committee on Special Education's psychologist, special education teacher, and social worker to determine the needs of students collaboratively.

Students are identified at the school-level, our school or the CSE will administer the one-on-one assessments to determine needs. Currently, the Harlem Village Academies Network is using the Woodcock/Johnson IV Test of Achievement and the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey.

Our Inclusion experts have extensive experience working with students, both in classroom environments and on a one-on-one basis. As a part of their teaching responsibilities, they work directly with classroom instructors to modify and refine curriculum, as needed. The deployment of Inclusion staffing is a part of the responsibilities of the Special Education Coordinator, Yolanda Gibson.

The HVAH building and campus is fully accessible to all students and is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and students with physical disabilities are granted key-access to an elevator to help them access all areas of the building.

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

The “IB for All” philosophy, and our focus on inclusion, applies to all members of the HVAH family. No staff or student can be discriminated against because of a disability, and we seek to include all of our students – from all aspects of the educational spectrum – in our daily activities. Because our school culture is defined by values that promote equity, inclusion, and social justice, we insist that all members of HVAH be given access to - and participate in - all classes, assemblies, and sports, to the extent that they wish to participate. Students are made aware of our policies of inclusion upon enrollment, and we model participation during all-school assemblies and in our sports program.

In addition to our student population, our parent population also features adults with accommodation needs. We provide interpreters for parent meetings, as needed, and real-time voice translation for phone calls to parents. Finally, communicating and discussing the needs of this segment of our larger community is a distinct focus of our district’s work.

## **COMMUNICATION**

The school’s inclusion policy is communicated to incoming parents, and to parents at various grade-level meetings throughout the year. In addition, it is also mentioned on our school and district websites. We use PowerSchool and email to communicate with parents – and local media to communicate with the community – especially during transition periods (between middle school, after each grade level, and during the years of the IB program). IB exam results are communicated directly to students through the use of the IBO website (and individual IB PIN codes distributed to all students, via print and through email). IB exam results become a part of the student’s permanent academic record after they are received from the IBO.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Harlem Village Academies High, and the Harlem Village Academies Network, comply with FERPA laws, which explicitly govern the confidentiality and dissemination of student data, assessment information, and the special education needs/information of students. Only qualified staff has access to basic student information; only the specific student’s instructor and administration has access to information regarding 504/IEP plans; only the IB Coordinator has access to the specific IB records (or accommodation requests) of students in IB classes.

Our network’s procedural safeguards are published in the document “New York State Education Department Procedural Safeguards Notice: May 2024” and are published on our state and network website:

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/special-education/procedural-safeguards-notice-english.pdf>

## **LEARNING**

The learning needs of Special Education Needs students are currently being met. Some students receive integrated co-teaching support in core content areas, such as English, History, Science, and Math. Several students receive "SETSS" Services (Special Education Teacher Support Services) - a one-on-one pull-out/push-in experience that provides them with additional instructional time. We strongly believe that students who struggle with learning should be provided every opportunity to remain in the classroom and learn amongst their peers. SETSS services are provided during additional time, so students do not miss core content or the ability to learn with their peers. During SETSS, students also reflect on their study and self-advocacy skills, so they can seek support on their own terms.

## **POLICY DOCUMENTATION / POLICY PROCESSES**

504 and IEP programs are documented at the network-level, and included in each student's permanent student file. Each IEP and 504 is reviewed yearly. Special Education policies are primarily governed at the state-level, and our network proactively responds to the individual needs of students as they arrive. As we are governed by federal and state laws, and have been authorized by the SUNY network, we seek to review policies for individual students immediately upon enrollment - or upon the diagnosis that leads to a Special Education assessment and evaluation.

**ESSENTIAL IB READINGS (all published by International Baccalaureate Organization, Cardiff, Wales):**

Access and inclusion policy (September 2022)

Assessment principles and practices – Quality assessments in a digital age – B: Fairness for all – meeting candidates’ needs (July 2019)

Diploma Programme Assessment procedures – C6: Inclusive access; C7: Students affected by adverse, medical, or special circumstances (September 2024)

Learning diversity and inclusion in IB programmes – Removing barriers to learning (updated May 2020)

Meeting student learning diversity in the classroom – Removing barriers to learning (December 2019)

Learning stories – Academic rigour and inclusion: Accommodating the diverse needs of learners in a multiple-programme IB World School

What is an IB education? (November 2019)