



Voorhees Township Public Schools

Special Services Handbook

08.2023

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Lauren Salls - Principal



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Welcome to the Special Services Department

The Voorhees Township Public Schools (VTPS) is proud to provide a full continuum of services to our students with specialized needs. Students must qualify for special education services based upon Child Study Team evaluations and findings. If determined eligible for special education and related services an individualized educational program (IEP) is developed. Parents and school personnel work together throughout this process in developing an appropriate program to meet the unique student needs. The district provides the full continuum of program options as outlined in the New Jersey Administrative Code N.J.A.C. 6A:14.





What is the Child Study Team

The Child Study Team (CST) is a multidisciplinary team responsible for locating, identifying, evaluating, determining eligibility, and developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for students suspected of having educational disabilities. This group of specialists includes school psychologists, learning disabilities teacher consultants, social workers, and in some cases speech/language therapists employed by the VTPS district to provide consultative, evaluative and prescriptive services to teachers and parents. The team provides diagnostic services to children from age 3 to grade 8 who have been identified as having a potentially disabling condition.

Roles of the Child Study Team Members

School Psychologists:

The school psychologist has expertise in determining a child's level of cognitive and conceptual development. In addition, the psychologist is concerned with the emotional status of the student, and how both internal and external factors may affect behavior and performance in school. The school psychologist works with both general education and special education teachers to maximize a student's potential. The school psychologist is primarily responsible for conducting psychological evaluations which typically include an assessment of intellectual ability and if needed, a behavior rating scale. The school psychologist provides both educational and social/emotional support for students.

Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultants:

The learning disabilities teacher-consultant functions in the school environment as an educational diagnostician, instructional programmer, educational consultant and instructional leader. The LDTC must have the professional preparation to make assessments, analyses, and classifications of students' learning differences, understand and implement special education law, plan and facilitate delivery of programs for children with learning differences, transfer specific and successful instructional techniques



to classroom teachers through consultation, collaboration, and in-service education, and effectively communicate and consult with parents, counselors, teachers, and administrators. The learning disabilities teacher-consultant conducts educational evaluations which include a review of the student's educational history, conferences with the student's teacher(s), and an evaluation and analysis of the student's academic performance and learning characteristics.

School Social Worker:

The expertise of the social worker lies in assessing the student relative to the family, the school, and the community. The social history evaluation is an assessment of biopsychosocial factors (social, emotional, physical, behavioral and cultural) that may impact a child's adjustment to and performance in school. The school social worker also provides counseling, crisis intervention and consultation services, as well as helping families' access community services.



Special Services Department Structure

Dr. Melody Alegria Ext. 6134 alegria@voorhees.k12.nj.us	Director of Special Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmative Action Officer • GCN Administrator • Registration • Office of Civil Rights Coordinator • Department Staff Evaluations
Donna Ross Ext. 6133 rossd@voorhees.k12.nj.us	Supervisor of Special Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 504 Officer (students) • Homeless Liaison • Staff Evaluations • DLM Coordinator • DCP&P Liaison
Jennifer Zuggi Ext. 6134 zuggij@voorhees.k12.nj.us	Secretary - Special Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase Orders/Billing • Timesheets • Service Contracts • Out of District Contracts
Jennifer Camp Ext. 6138 camp@voorhees.k12.nj.us	Secretary - Special Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEMI process • Frontline questions and access • Related Service coordination
<p>Jordyn Sullender - lead teacher VMS sullender@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Dawn Danley- lead teacher elementary resource danleyd@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Kim Brand - lead teacher LLD program brand@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p>	Lead Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and plan teacher professional development • Facilitate teacher collaboration • Coordinate consistency among programs



<p>Amy Behnke - Osage, ext. 6132 or 4194 behnke@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Kiera Williams - Kresson, (preschool) ext. 6136 williamsk@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p>	<p>School Social Workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counseling/social groups• Oversee/monitor IEP• Referral Review• CST evaluation and eligibility• Maintain contact with teachers and related services• Ensure proper implementation of IEP
<p>Michael Kotch - ETH, ext. 3142 kotch@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Amanda Packen - Signal Hill, ext. 6139 or 1127 packen@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Jennifer Howard - VMS, ext. 5217 howardj@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Melissa Williams - VMS, ext. 5204 williamsm@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p>	<p>School Psychologists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counseling/social groups• Oversee/monitor IEP• Referral Review• CST evaluation and eligibility• Maintain contact with teachers and related services• Ensure proper implementation of IEP
<p>Lisa Brooks - Autism Support/low incidence, ext. 6147 brooksl@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Holly Rosica - Kresson, ext. 6137 rosicah@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Dawn Danley - VMS, ext. 5218 danley@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p>	<p>Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversee/monitor IEP• Referral Review• CST evaluation and eligibility• Maintain contact with teachers and related services• Ensure proper implementation of IEP• Teacher support/consultation as needed



<p>Allison Adams - Signal Hill, Osage, ETH, VMS ext. 6146 adamsa@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Jennifer Demski - preschool and Kresson ext. 6140 demskij@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p>	<p>Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism support program • Preschool self contained • Provide behavior support and consultation for specialized needs
<p>Kim Brand - Kresson brand@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Marisa Melchiorre - Osage melchiorre@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Debbie Hayden- preschool hayden@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Sophie Nykiel - Signal Hill nykiel@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Alyson Snider - ETH snider@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Erin Toye - Autism toye@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Beth Zanetich- VMS zanetich@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Jennifer Kilpatrick- VMS, ETH kilpatrick@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p>	<p>Speech/Language Therapists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication development • Articulation therapy • Language therapy • Augmentative and Assistive Technology (Erin Toye)
<p>Kirsten Ware -Signal Hill, ETH ware@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Brooke Yarnal-Kresson, Osage yarnal@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p> <p>Mika Doner-Kresson, VMS doner@voorhees.k12.nj.us</p>	<p>Occupational Therapists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine motor and coordination • Core Stability • Can be added to 504 given medical documentation and approval from school-based OT



Brandon DeAngelo- All schools deangelob@voorhees.k12.nj.us	Physical Therapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gross motor, coordination, and balance• Core Stability• Can be added to 504 given medical documentation and approval from school-based PT
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Referral Process

Children in preschool through eighth grade who are suspected of having a disability that adversely impacts their educational performance can be referred for child study team evaluations. Referrals can be submitted to the Director of Special Services, Supervisor of Special Services, Child Study Team, and/or School Administrators. A referral for speech articulation disorders should be made directly to a classroom teacher or the school speech/language therapist. Referrals can come from a variety of sources which include school personnel, parents/guardians, and in some cases, state agencies. Typically, a referral is generated by school staff after a student is shown to make inadequate progress despite receiving consistent and research based interventions. NJ Administrative Code 6A:14-3.3 (b) mandates that "interventions in the general education setting shall be provided to students exhibiting academic difficulties and shall be utilized, as appropriate, prior to referring a student for an evaluation of eligibility for special education and related services."

[NJ Administrative Code 6A:14](#)

Timelines and Procedures

Once a referral for Child Study Team evaluations is received, the Director of Special Education will assign a case manager. The case manager will schedule an Identification and Evaluation Planning meeting within 20 days. Meeting attendees include parents/guardians, the classroom teacher, a school psychologist, a school social worker, a learning disabilities teacher-consultant, and if needed, a speech/language therapist. The purpose of this meeting is to review the referral information and to determine if child study team evaluations are warranted.

A referral to the Child Study Team does not guarantee that evaluations will be conducted. The team will review information presented by parents, teachers, and school performance data to determine if testing is warranted. If Child Study Team evaluations are warranted, the team will develop an assessment plan. Written consent from a parent/guardian is required before the testing process begins. Evaluations will be completed and an Eligibility Determination meeting will be held within 90 days of parent consent. During this meeting, evaluation reports will be interpreted and it will be decided if



the student meets eligibility criteria for special education and related services.



Eligibility for Special Education and Related Services

A determination for special education and related services eligibility is made in accordance with NJ Administrative Code 6A:14-3.5(c) which states, "A student shall be determined eligible and classified "eligible for special education and related services" under this chapter when it is determined that the student has one or more of the disabilities defined in (c)1 through 14 below, the disability adversely affects the student's educational performance, and the student is in need of special education and related services. "

Eligibility Categories:

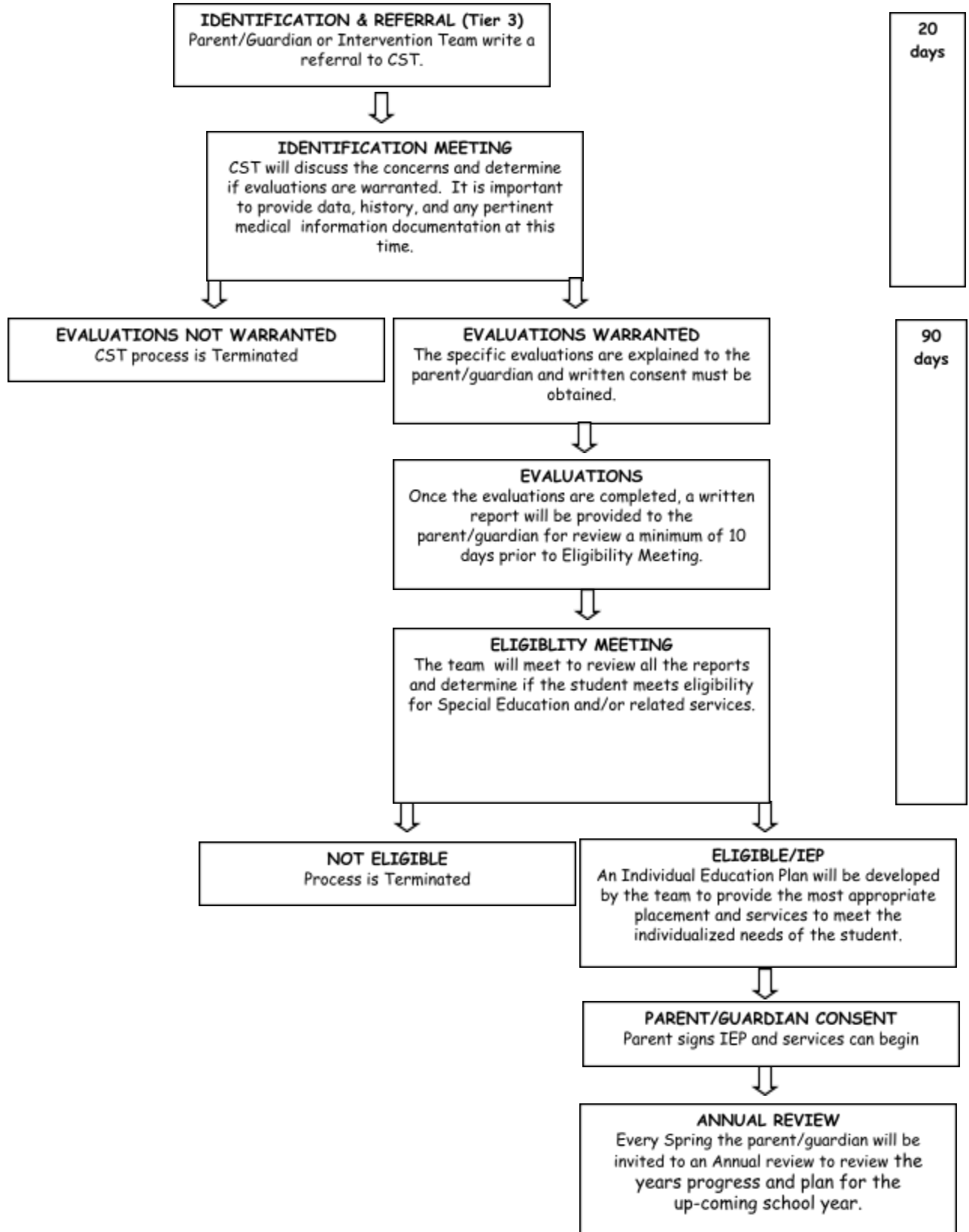
- Auditory Impairment
- Autism
- Intellectual Disability
- Communication Impairment
- Emotional Regulation Impairment
- Multiple Disabilities
- Deaf/Blindness
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Preschool Child with a Disability
- Specific Learning Disability
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

A three-pronged eligibility approach is used to determine if a student qualifies for services under NJ Administrative Code 6A:14-3.5(c).

- Does the student have one or more of the disabling conditions defined under code?
- Does the disability adversely impact the student's educational performance?
- Does the student demonstrate a need for specialized interventions and instruction?



CHILD STUDY TEAM PROCESS





Individualized Education Program

Once a child is deemed eligible for special education and related services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed. An IEP is a legally binding document which describes the students present levels of performance, strengths, areas of need, and eligibility category. The IEP also outlines specific special education programs, modifications, accommodations, and related services the child will receive. Annual measurable goals are developed as a part of the student's IEP and these goals are monitored throughout the school year. The student's IEP is reviewed every spring at an Annual Review Meeting, during which time programming, goals, and instructional needs are developed for the upcoming school year. Parents and school personnel can request an IEP meeting at any time to review student progress and/or make revisions to IEP. The student's IEP team will discuss and determine the need for re-evaluation every three years.





Special Education Programs

The Voorhees Township School District strives to ensure all students receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for students ages 3 to eighth grade in the least restrictive environment. A full continuum of special education program options are available and include general education classrooms, resource centers, special education classes, home instruction, and occasionally, when required, programs in public or private out of district schools. Every effort is made to include students with disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate with students who are not disabled. Related Services including, but not limited to school nursing services, speech/language therapy, occupational and physical therapies, counseling, and special transportation, are provided to students who are deemed in need of such services by the IEP team in consultation with specialists.



**In-Class Support (Inclusion):**

The In-Class Support Program includes two teachers, one general education teacher and one special education teacher, within the general education setting. The teachers work collaboratively to provide support, accommodations, instructional interventions, and modifications to students who are eligible for special education services. The general education curriculum, scope, sequence and pacing is followed. The teachers use grade level curriculum and materials, as well as small group instruction strategies to meet the needs of all learners.

Resource Room (Pull Out Instruction):

Small group resource instruction in a pull out setting is provided at all grade levels for Literacy and Mathematics. This program focuses on providing targeted interventions in reading, writing, literacy, and mathematics, while simultaneously providing exposure to grade level student learning standards and content. Teachers have access to a variety of specialized learning tools that support basic reading development and foundational math skills. The pacing of instruction is modified to allow for repetition and skills acquisition. If needed, students are exposed to high interest learning materials at modified reading and math levels to maximize their academic growth.

Learning/Language Disabilities Program:

The Learning/Language Disabilities Program is a specially designed setting that provides a high level of academic, behavioral, and language support throughout the day. Students may receive literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science instruction in this setting based upon their individual needs. This classroom focuses on providing targeted, language-based interventions for each student's individual learning goals and academic levels. A high staff to student ratio is provided to ensure individual needs are met.

Autism Support Program:

The Autism Support Program is a highly structured, individualized program based upon the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). This program maintains a minimum of a 3:1 student:staff ratio; however, additional support is provided as deemed appropriate by individual student needs.



Related services are a regular part of this program. These services are determined based upon student needs and may include behavior consultation with the district Board Certified Behavior Analyst, speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and AAC consultation. Teachers use a variety of curriculum supports to ensure academic, behavior, social, language, and daily living skills goals are met. The STAR curriculum, Reading Milestones, EDMARK, Reading Mastery, and Touch Math are used to target specific skills. As students make progress towards learning outcomes, materials from the general education curriculum are introduced. Community based instruction is integrated into program goals and activities. Students also participate in regular social building opportunities through reverse inclusion, peer buddy programs, and when appropriate, inclusive activities.

Multiple Disabilities Program:

Voorhees Middle School offers a Multiple Disabilities Program for students in grades 5 through 8. This program focuses on student learning standards taught within a functional context of real life activities. Skills concepts include responding to language, communicating with others, functional academics, engaging in diverse activities, school routines, and community/vocational routines. Lessons are taught in a variety of ways and settings within the school building with opportunities to generalize skills in community settings through community based instruction.

Preschool Inclusion:

Preschool Inclusion classes are available for three and four year old students. These are full day general education classes for the inclusion of students with disabilities. The program follows state mandates including the Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines and the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards as they relate to providing preschool children with a high-quality education. The Creative Curriculum is used, which is developmentally appropriate and provides learning experiences for all content areas and all developmental domains. This high-quality programming is based on comprehensive early learning standards that address the whole child. Each day, children will follow a schedule that consists of a morning meeting, small group instruction in literacy and math, choice time for intentional play experiences, large group time, gross motor time, snack, lunch, rest, shared reading and shared writing. Individual goals for students with an IEP are developed and followed based upon each child's



individual needs. Related services, such as speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavior consultation, and adult support are incorporated into each child's program as needed.

Preschool Disabilities Program:

This specially designed full day preschool program provides highly structured, individualized, play-based learning experiences which are developmental in nature. Intense teaching trails are integrated throughout the day based upon the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis. Students receive targeted interventions that address language development, social skills, daily living skills, pre-academics, self-regulation, and behavior. Educators prioritize the use of visual cues, picture symbols, sensory-integration activities, and communication. Related services are provided based upon each child's specific needs. Related services may include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavior consultation, and adult support.

Out of District Placement

A variety of Out of District alternative school placement may be considered if a student's individual needs are such that they can not be met through in-district school programs, related services, and supports.





Related Services

Related services are provided within the context of the school day for those students who qualify. Eligibility for related services must include observing the student within the educational environment and assessing his or her ability to meet the demands of the current educational program. If environmental adaptations and modifications are in place and teaching staff are trained to meet the goals of the IEP, then services may not be required. Related services may be provided as a pull-out model, integrated or push-in model, or as a consultation. Several related services are provided within the school district, which include, but are not limited to:

Speech/Language Therapy

Speech/Language Therapy may address articulation deficits, expressive language deficits, receptive language deficits and/or comprehension.

Augmentative/Assistive Technology Consultation

Augmentative/Assistive Technology devices are made available to students who qualify to ensure they have equitable access to learning tools and educational experiences.

Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapy services are designed to adapt the classroom environment, assist in the development of performance components that are prerequisites for academic learning, and facilitate functional daily living skills within a child's current educational setting.

Physical Therapy

Physical Therapy is designed to assist children with physical disabilities gain access to the educational environment and resources that are present in his placement.

Behavior Consultation

Consultation with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst is designed to establish and implement proactive strategies within the classroom as well as in other



school environments. Providing high rates of reinforcement, effective communication systems, and a predictable routine are some of the strategies that are used to establish an environment conducive to learning and appropriate behavior.

Counseling Services

School based counseling services are designed to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally by collaborating with educators and parents to create supportive learning environments for all students.

Adult Support (Instructional Associate)

The need for additional support by an instructional associate is determined by data collection and student needs. An instructional associate may be incorporated into a student's individual education program to support a student's academic or behavioral needs.

Nursing Services

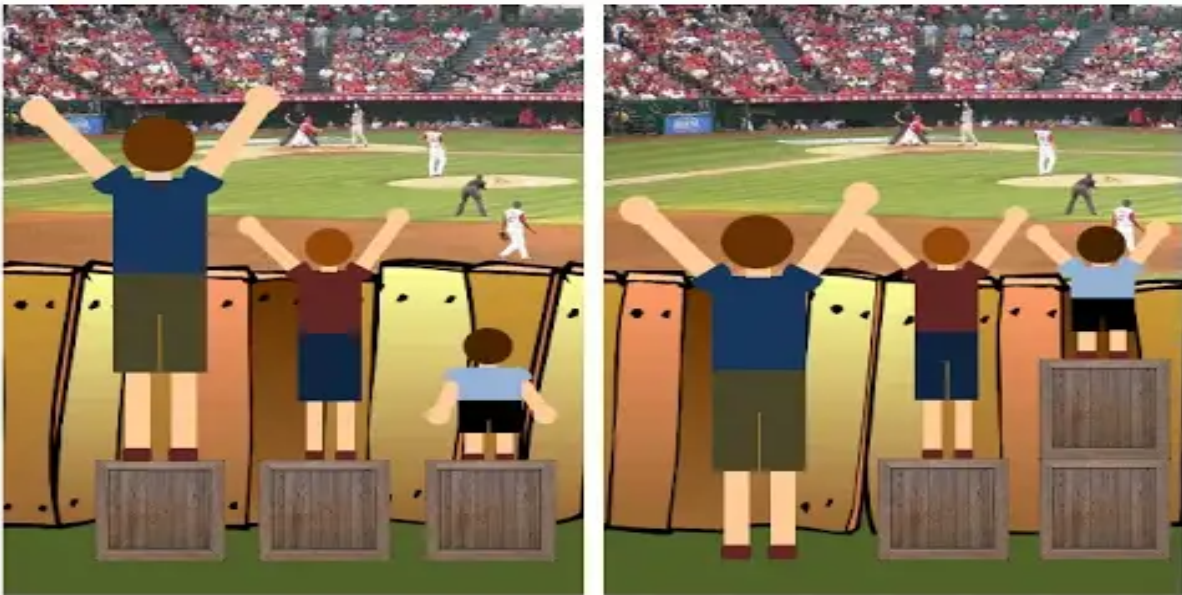
Nursing services are provided for students who require ongoing medical support during the school day. The need for this service is determined by medical evaluations, CST collaboration, and parent input.



Accommodations and Modifications

A wide variety of accommodations and modifications can be incorporated into a child's individualized education program based upon his or her unique needs. The purpose of an accommodation or modification is to address the unique needs that result from the child's disability and ensure access of the child to the general curriculum. Accommodations and modifications are designed to assist with the following:

- Content Material Modifications
- Organizational Modifications
- Instructional Modifications
- Assessment Accommodations
- Accommodations for Attention & Focus
- Written Language Accommodations
- Social/Behavioral Accommodations





Accommodation:

An accommodation is a change made to the teaching or testing procedures to provide a student with access to information and to create an equal opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills. An accommodation changes how the student accesses the general education curriculum.

Examples:

- Presentation:
 - Provide on audio tape
 - Provide in large print
 - Reduce number of items per page or line
- Response:
 - Allow for verbal responses
 - Allow for answers to be dictated to a scribe
 - Allow the use of a tape recorder to capture responses
- Timing:
 - Allow frequent breaks
 - Extend allotted time for a test
- Setting:
 - Provide preferential seating
 - Administer a test in small group setting
 - Visual Schedules
- Test Scheduling:
 - Administer a test in several timed sessions or over several days
 - Allow subtests to be taken in a different order
- Other:
 - Provide special test preparation
 - Provide on-task/focusing prompts

**Modification:**

A modification is a change in materials or procedures that enables a student to access instruction and assessment. A modification changes what the student is expected to learn and/or demonstrate. While a student may be working on modified course content, the subject area remains the same as the rest of the class.

Making an assignment easier so the student is not doing the same level of work as other students is an example of a modification.



- OR -





Extended School Year

Extended School Year (ESY) is provided to students who demonstrate a significant risk for regression of skills and recoupment is not expected within reasonable time limits. Not every student is eligible for an extended school year. The ESY program runs for six weeks in the summer, Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Students can receive instruction on skills that have been taught throughout the school year and receive related services if needed. Transportation is provided for students who are eligible for this program.





Culminating Activities

Buddy Day

As a culminating event for our autism classes and peer buddy groups, a culminating event is held to celebrate the friendships that have been developed. This event is held on the track field and Voorhees Middle School and includes several opportunities for interactive play and crafts that our students and their families can enjoy.



Static Communication Boards

Static communication boards have been installed in our playgrounds and cafeterias to promote understanding and acceptance of augmentative and alternative forms of communication.





The Child Study Team and the Special Services Personnel are here to help. Please contact your child's Case Manager, Supervisor of Special Services, or the Director of Special Services if you have any questions.

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much"

-Helen Keller

