

SPECIAL EDUCATION AT WESTBROOK ES

There are many programs at Westbrook to serve students with special needs. Below is a short summary of each program to help you. As a Community of Caring, we look to our parents to reinforce that we accept all students and be understanding of those who learn differently or need specialized instruction to be successful.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) mandates that "to the maximum extent appropriate" children with disabilities must be "educated with children who are not disabled." Moreover, assignment to "special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment" should occur "only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be satisfactorily achieved." We strive to fully mainstream all of our students into the general education setting.

Each program described below is staffed by highly qualified teachers and paraeducators who provide a continuum of services in the general education setting as well as in small group settings.

The ED (Emotional Disabilities) Cluster Program In an effort to provide comprehensive services to students experiencing significant emotional and/or behavioral difficulties, MCPS has established the Emotional Disabilities (ED) Cluster Program. Services for Students with Emotional Disabilities meets the needs of students in grades K-12 who are experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties in school. By identifying developmentally appropriate learning strategies and interventions based on current research, staff addresses each individual's needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE). ED Cluster Programs are comprised of two or more classes in a general education building. Each classroom is staffed with a special education teacher and one to two paraeducators. Additionally, at the middle school and high school levels, ED Cluster Programs have one special education resource teacher to act as a team leader and coordinate the program. Furthermore, ED Cluster Programs have additional, itinerant resources of behavior support teachers, social workers, and psychologists. These support staff help each school site provide students with a full continuum of services, ranging from self-contained programming to full mainstreaming and inclusion in school-wide activities. These specialists are not school based as they are assigned to multiple ED Cluster Programs.

Through the collaborative effort between special education staff members, school counselors and general education teachers, students in ED Programs receive formal instruction in social skills in areas pertinent to school success. Skills such as: interpersonal and cultural competencies, peaceful conflict resolution, organization, planning and decision-making are crucial assets to student success. Further, social skills instruction provides opportunities for personal growth by emphasizing positive values and development of self-esteem. Although the teaching of social skills is through direct instruction, it is also infused throughout the school day, presented in a classroom meeting format and if needed, in the form of responsive counseling.

The vision of the ED program is to reach and teach all Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) children and youth that face social, emotional, and behavioral challenges so they can become healthy, productive members in their communities.

Home School Model (HSM) are services provided to home school students with learning or other mild to moderate disabilities who require special education services in order to access the MCPS curriculum. Services may be provided in a continuum of settings including general education

classrooms and in small group pull-out settings, based upon individual needs. HSM is built on the foundation of more accepting and inclusive elementary school communities. Students in the HSM can have a wide range of disabilities which can include, but are not limited to, a specific learning disability, Autism, Aspergers, or language disorders.

Speech and Language Services: The goals of speech and language services are to diagnose and remediate communication disorders, facilitate the development of compensatory skills, and enhance the development of language, vocabulary, and expressive communication skills. The type and frequency of services provided are determined by individual student needs.