

SOMERSET BERKLEY
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



SOMERSET PUBLIC SCHOOLS

All Students Achieving Excellence

Special Education Programs and Services

Introduction

Special education within the Somerset Public Schools encompasses a wide range of services for eligible students with disabilities, ages 3–22. In accordance with federal and state laws and regulations, students identified as eligible for special education have an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) that is designed by a team of individuals that includes district general and special education teachers, related service providers, other pertinent district professionals, the parents/guardians, and the student, when appropriate. Each IEP is developed to meet the unique needs of the student and includes information of what services will be provided, where the services will be provided, and the goals set for the student. All programs and services are provided at no expense to parents.

The Somerset Public Schools provide a wide range of specialized instruction that represents a continuum of service delivery options. In keeping with the federal mandate of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), teams will always consider providing specialized instruction in the general education classroom first with appropriate support in place. The vast majority of our special education students receive their specialized instruction within an inclusive environment, spending more than 80% of their day in the general education classroom. When the appropriate level of services requires instruction outside the general education classroom, the IEP team will consider other placement options, such as a pull out special education services, a specialized district program, or special education programs outside the Somerset Public Schools in a state approved special education school or collaborative.

District programs are developed when a cohort of students have like needs of a more intensive nature. Throughout each level (preschool – post high school), highly specialized programs exist for students with autism, language-based learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral challenges, and for students whose disabilities cross domains, resulting in a need for an integrated team approach. The specialized programs that are a part of the Somerset Public School system are described within this document.

Special education is a highly regulated and complex process. The special educators work closely with families and encourage a collaborative relationship.

Each level, preschool/elementary through high school, has an IEP Coordinator/Sp. Education Content Coordinator that coordinates special education services. The following provides contact information should you have questions regarding special education processes or procedures:

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Specialized Programs:

Elementary Programs:

DLC: Developmental Learning Centers: North Elementary and Chace Elementary: Grades K-2/3

Description, Mission, and Goals

The Somerset Public Schools Developmental Learning Center (DLC) is a specialized program for students whose developmental needs interfere with their ability to fully access the school environment and the curriculum within a traditional classroom setting. Students in this program learn academic skills (readiness, reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies). Additionally, they learn daily living skills (handwashing, shoe tying, etc.), communication skills (requesting, commenting, protesting, etc.), and social skills (turn-taking, following directions, etc.). Students follow modified curriculum goals, which are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Students in the DLC program may also receive related services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy and counseling. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

In the DLC program students may require instruction based on the principles of the Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) methodology. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a systematic method of instruction that uses a series of prompts and positive reinforcement to generalize learned behaviors and reduce problem behaviors. Students are taught in small groups or individually when using this methodology however generalization of skills in the least restrictive environment is always the target goal. Discrete trial training (DTT), will be used as an instructional strategy as needed. DTI is a method of instruction in which a skill is broken down into smaller/ more discrete components to address appropriate IEP goals. Natural Environment Teaching (NET) will then be used to generalize those skills to the natural environment.

Program Overview

The DLC program provides all services in a highly structured classroom housed within a public school environment. We believe that with consistent routines and expectations, direct instruction in necessary skills, and the proper supports and scaffolding, all students can and will contribute positively to the classroom community and participate in less restrictive programming whenever possible (ie: specials, lunch, recess, and general education classrooms). Transitions from more restrictive settings to less restrictive settings will be based on individual student needs, progress, and abilities and will be driven by data collection and Team collaboration, including parents.

The DLC program employs a wide range of educational and therapeutic theories and methodologies, recognizing that students come to us with different cultural backgrounds, experiences, needs, and learning styles and that in order to be most impactful, instruction must be tailored to meet the needs of, and build on the strengths of each individual learner.

In addition to direct instruction in social skills, life skills, functional communication, and motor skills in individual and group settings, these skills, and related expectations are embedded into all academic instruction and school routines. Students are taught to understand and effectively manage their emotional reactions to situations in order to respond in a manner that is respectful, responsible, and safe. The goal of this program is for students to become more confident, improve their self-esteem, and participate in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as

appropriate. Students will be included in general education classes such as art, music, gym, science, and social studies as determined by student need and their respective IEP teams.

Routines and behavioral processes and interventions are provided on an individualized basis and are created in collaboration with families and a whole class level system are also in place to ensure a positive approach to behavioral expectations.

The primary program goal is to provide students with the intensive instruction they require in a substantially separate environment in order to prepare them to:

- effectively engage in learning
- learn and utilize daily living skills
- establish and maintain relationships
- access the school environment safely
- engage in a classroom setting without disruption to the learning environment of themselves and others

The end goal is always to encourage and facilitate successful participation in the least restrictive environment (LRE) whenever possible and inclusion opportunities are built into the program.

Students Served

The DLC program is designed for students who require a language-rich environment, a highly modified curriculum, smaller class size, and a lower student/teacher ratio. This program serves students on the Autism spectrum and with other significant developmental delays who have qualified for special education services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and are not able to fully access traditional classroom settings due to their communication, social-emotional/behavioral, life skills and academic needs based on formal evaluations, data collection, observation, team collaboration, and family consultation. Students in the DLC program attend all school-wide events, field trips, and social activities. Students are integrated with typically developing peers in general education classrooms during academic and social activities, as appropriate. There are also many opportunities for reverse inclusion, where typical peers come to the substantially separate classroom to interact, study, and play with students in this Insights classroom.

Services Offered

In order to best meet the needs of our students, DLC offers the following services:

- Individualized, scaffolded curriculum and academic instruction
- The principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Discrete Trial Instruction (DTI), (individualized per student where appropriate)
- Embedded consultation with Board Certified Behavior Analysts
- Embedded positive behavior management and self-regulation support
- Social skills development
- Coping skills development
- Daily living skills.
- Instruction in executive function and self-regulatory skills
- Regular, structured opportunities to generalize skills to general education settings
- Access to school counselors
- Occupational, Physical, and/or Speech therapy as required per IEP
- Family assistance with securing outside behavioral & mental health services and providers

Staff

The DLC program is staffed by a full-time special education teacher and paraprofessionals (this number varies based on the number of students and level of need). Consultation and collaboration with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) is embedded into the program, as well as, regular support and intervention with the speech-language pathologist and speech-language assistant, occupational therapist and occupational therapy assistant, and physical therapist (as dictated by IEP services).

Entrance criteria:

- The IEP Team has determined that the student has a documented disability in one or more of the following areas that prevents typical developmental growth:

Developmental Delay

Communication Impairment

Physical Impairment

Neurological Impairment

Intellectual Impairment

- Delays in cognitive and/or adaptive behavioral functioning that are far below the average range that may impact a student's level of independence throughout his or her life. Considerations of medical issues that could impact the student's abilities to make effective progress without supports
- Significant weaknesses in cognitive functioning
- FSIQ typically falls below 70
- Delays in one or more adaptive behaviors

Exit Criteria:

- Student has made significant progress such that he/she can be educated in a less restrictive environment.
- The student no longer requires extensive modifications and/or accommodations to the curriculum
- The student demonstrates increased class participation, independence, and self-advocacy skills in the general education/inclusion setting.
- Recent evaluation data shows significant progress

SLC: Specialized Learning Centers: North Elementary and Chace Elementary: Grades 2/3-5

Overview: This is a specialized substantially separate/partial inclusion classroom which is designed for students who continue to require additional support and instruction based on their individual needs. Students require instruction within this setting to maximize learning and to build on foundational skills. The goal of the program is to address the multiple needs of the students by providing assistance in the areas of communication, academics, social skills, behavior support, independence, as well as their daily living skills so they are able to be successful. Students are grouped according to academic strengths and/or weaknesses. The goal of this program is for students to become more independent, confident, improve their self-esteem, and participate in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as appropriate. Students will be included in general education classes such as art, music, gym, science, and social studies as determined by student need and their respective IEP teams. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

Student Needs: The SLC program serves students with moderate to severe cognitive impairment and developmental and communication needs that affect student access to general education curriculum. These students are functioning

significantly below grade level, typically 2 to 3 years. They require a significant amount of accommodations and/or modifications to access the grade level curriculum to make effective progress. Students in the SLC program typically are taking alternate MCAS though this determination is not made until third grade. Students will often take traditional MCAS in third grade with individualized accommodations for a baseline MCAS assessment when appropriate.

Staffing: The staffing consists of one special education teacher and a paraprofessional for the SLC program. Each classroom will be supported by a school psychologist, school adjustment counselor, as well as consultation with a board certified behavior analysis. Related service providers support students based on their individual goals.

Entrance criteria:

- The IEP Team has determined that the student has a documented disability in one or more of the following areas that prevents typical developmental growth:

Developmental Delay

Communication Impairment

Physical Impairment

Neurological Impairment

Intellectual Impairment

- Delays in cognitive and/or adaptive behavioral functioning that are far below the average range that may impact a student's level of independence throughout his or her life. Considerations of medical issues that could impact the student's abilities or make effective progress without supports
- Significant weaknesses in cognitive functioning
- FSIQ typically falls below 70
- Delays in one or more adaptive behaviors

Exit Criteria:

- Student has made significant progress such that he/she can be educated in a less restrictive environment.
- The student no longer requires extensive modifications and/or accommodations to the curriculum
- The student demonstrates increased class participation, independence, and self-advocacy skills in the general education/inclusion setting.
- Recent evaluation data shows significant progress

TLC (Therapeutic Learning Center): Location: South Elementary

TLC PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) recognizes that many students adapt reasonably well to a general academic setting, while some students need a more formal and structured setting to meet with success. The purpose of this program is to provide the atmosphere, structure and support needed to help these students experience academic, emotional and social success. This program is a fluid program that allows for varying levels of inclusion dependent upon the individual student's needs and progress. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

This program is a highly structured, therapeutic program, serving the needs of students with social-emotional and behavioral needs, which significantly impact their ability to access the curriculum full-time in the General Education classroom. The program provides a structured educational and behavioral milieu to assist students in the development of pro-social behaviors, healthy coping skills, and social problem-solving techniques. Targeted positive reinforcement, recognizing each student's unique challenges and abilities, as well as utilizing therapeutic approaches to managing behaviors, are key elements to the delivery of services in the TLC. Accommodations and modifications

are reflected in the student's Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) to successfully engage in the delivery of the state frameworks and general education curriculum. TLC staff work collaboratively to maintain an updated Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and consistently review and revise student behavior intervention plans (FAIR plans), with the goal of improving the student's overall functioning within the academic setting. The school adjustment counselor works with the students to provide individual and group counseling, as well as consultation to parents, staff, and outside support personnel in collaboration with the Special Education classroom teacher and the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Students may also receive other support services, such as speech and language, occupational, and/or physical therapy(ies) as outlined in their IEPs. Students in the program are integrated into the general education classroom as appropriate, as demonstrated by their regulation of feelings and behaviors and positive choices. Successful integration may require support from staff to help students transition to the less restrictive environment. As a student's ability to participate consistently in the general education setting (with or without support), a transition plan for the less restrictive environment will be created and reflected in the student's IEP. Our program is designed to foster an environment that recognizes and supports the needs of individual students as they strive for academic and social success.

Entrance and Exit Criteria:

Entrance Criteria:

Based on the current active and accepted IEP, students recommended for the Therapeutic Learning Center are found eligible based on a primary eligibility criteria of Emotional Disability. The student has demonstrated significant difficulty accessing and participating in the LRE evidenced by poor grades, inability to access curriculum, inability to interact with adults and peers, inability to maintain safety in school or inability to attend school (school refusal). Furthermore, the team, through the IEP process must identify that the Therapeutic Learning Center is the LRE either through documented lack of progress in the General Education setting with specialized instruction provided in the building based Resource Room.

A more restrictive program request must include a meeting with the Special Education Director for review.

Exit Criteria

A student may exit the Therapeutic Learning Center once ability to make effective progress in the LRE is demonstrated and documented in IEP goals and objectives.

A systematic fading of supportive services will be implemented once a student demonstrates an ability to access content and the life of the school with increased independence.

Furthermore, through the IEP process, the team must identify through data collection that the student is able to access and participate in the LRE.

Middle School Specialized Program Descriptions:

SLC: Specialized Learning Center, Grade 6-8

Overview: This is a specialized substantially separate classroom which is designed for students who require additional support and instruction based on their individual needs. Students require instruction within this setting to maximize learning and to hone in on foundational skills. The goal of the program is to address the multiple needs of the students by providing assistance in the areas of communication, functional academics, social skills, behavior support, independence, as well as their daily living skills so they are able to be successful. Students are grouped according to academic strengths and/or weaknesses. The goal of this program is for students to become more confident, improve their self-esteem, and participate in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as appropriate. Students will be included in Related Arts classes including Art, Music, Technology, Physical Education, and Wellness. Students in the SLC program may also receive related services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy and counseling. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

Student Needs: The SLC program serves students with moderate to severe cognitive impairments. These students are functioning significantly below grade level, typically 3+ years and most often are following a portfolio alternate MCAS track. The students require specialized designed instruction in all academic areas as well as functional areas.

Staffing: The SLC staffing is determined based on student needs. The staffing consists of one special education teacher, one consulting BCBA, and paraprofessional support which varies based on enrollment and student needs. Additionally, the classroom is supported by a School Psychologist, School Adjustment Counselor, and related service providers (ex. OT, Speech/Language Pathologist, PT, APE) based on individual student goals.

Entrance and Exit Criteria:

Entrance Criteria

Based on the current active and accepted IEP, students recommended for the Specialized Learning center are eligible for participation in this program based on documented disability(s) in one or more of the following areas, Communication Impairment, Physical Impairment, Neurological Impairment, Intellectual Impairment, Multiple Disabilities, and/or Autism. Additionally, students must possess delays in cognitive and/or adaptive behavioral functioning that are far below the average range and significantly impact a student's level of independence throughout his or her life including school, home and community based activities.

A more restrictive program request must include a meeting with the Special Education director for review.

Exit Criteria

A student may exit the Specialized Learning Center once the student has made significant progress and is no longer presenting with skill deficits 3 or more years below their current grade level. Additionally students should no longer require extensive modifications and/or accommodations to the curriculum and an increase in class participation, independence and self-advocacy skills that would allow the student to access the curriculum within the general education/inclusion setting. Recent evaluation data should indicate significant cognitive, academic and functional growth with a full scale IQ above 70. Furthermore, through the IEP process, the team must identify through data collection that the student is able to access and participate in the least restrictive environment and maintain that participation over time.

Skills-Based Learning Center (SBLC), Grades 6-8:

Overview: This is a program designed for students who require specialized, targeted instruction and additional support based on their individual needs. Students access instruction within the SBLC classroom, small group math and ELA classrooms, and the general education setting to maximize learning and to hone in on foundational skills. The goal of the program is to address the multiple needs of the students' by providing assistance in the areas of communication, academics, social skills, behavior support, executive functioning, independence, as well as their daily living skills so they are able to be successful across all areas.

Student Needs: The SBLC program serves students with mild to moderate cognitive impairment and developmental and communication needs that affect student access to general education curriculum. These students are functioning significantly below grade level, typically 2 to 3 years. They require accommodations and/or modifications to the general curriculum to access classroom content and to make effective progress towards their individualized goals. Students in the SBLC program take on demand MCAS with individualized accommodations.

Staffing: The staffing consists of one special education teacher and paraprofessional staffing that varies based on the number of students receiving services in the program. The classroom is supported by a school psychologist, school adjustment counselor, as well as consultation with a board certified behavior analysis (BCBA). Related service providers support students based on their individual goals.

Entrance and Exit Criteria

Entrance Criteria:

Based on the current active and accepted IEP, students recommended for the Skills-Based Learning Center are found eligible based on primary eligibility criteria of Communication, Physical Impairment, Autism, Specific Learning Disability, Neurological Impairment, Intellectual Impairment and/or Health . The student has demonstrated significant difficulty accessing and participating in a less restrictive environment based on poor grades, inability to access curriculum, and/or documented need for access to a smaller learning environment in order to make effective progress towards their individualized goals.

A more restrictive program request must include a meeting with the Special Education Director for review.

Exit Criteria:

A student may exit the SBLC once ability to make effective progress in the LRE is demonstrated and documented in the IEP goals and objectives, a systematic fading of supports indicates continued success, and/or student demonstrates improvement in academic achievement and adaptive behaviors such that the LRE would be a less restrictive environment with increased access to the general education setting.

Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC), Grade 6-8

TLC PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Overview: The Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) recognizes that many students adapt reasonably well to a general academic setting, while some students need a more formal and structured setting to meet with success. The purpose of this program is to provide the atmosphere, structure and support needed to help these students experience academic, emotional and social success. Our program is a fluid program that allows for varying levels of inclusion dependent upon the individual student's needs and progress. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

Student Needs: This program is a highly structured, therapeutic program, serving the needs of students with social-emotional and behavioral needs, which significantly impact their ability to access the curriculum full-time in the General Education classroom. The program provides a structured educational and behavioral milieu to assist students in the development of appropriate social behaviors, healthy coping skills, and social problem-solving techniques. Targeted positive reinforcement, recognizing each student's unique challenges and abilities, as well as utilizing therapeutic approaches to managing behaviors, are key elements to the delivery of services in the TLC. Accommodations and modifications are reflected in the student's Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) to successfully engage in the delivery of the state frameworks and general education curriculum. TLC staff work collaboratively to maintain an updated Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and consistently review and revise student behavior intervention plans (FAIR plans), with the goal of improving the student's overall functioning within the academic setting. The school adjustment counselor works with the students to provide individual and group counseling, as well as consultation to parents, staff, and outside support personnel in collaboration with the Special Education classroom teacher and the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Students may also receive other support services, such as speech and language, occupational, and/or physical therapy(ies) as outlined in their IEPs. Students in the program are integrated into the general education classroom as appropriate, as demonstrated by their regulation of feelings and behaviors and positive choices. Successful integration may require support from staff to help students transition to the less restrictive environment. As a student's ability to participate consistently in the general education setting (with or without support), a transition plan for the less restrictive environment will be created and reflected in the student's IEP. Our program is designed to foster an environment that recognizes and supports the needs of individual students as they strive for academic and social success.

Staffing: TLC staffing is determined based on student needs. The staffing consists of one special education teacher, one consulting BCBA, and paraprofessional support which varies based on enrollment and student needs. Additionally, the classroom is supported by a School Psychologist, School Adjustment Counselor(s), and related service providers based on individual student goals.

Entrance and Exit Criteria:

Entrance Criteria:

Based on the current active and accepted IEP, students recommended for the Therapeutic Learning Center are found eligible based on eligibility criteria of Emotional Disability. The student has demonstrated significant difficulty accessing and participating in the LRE evidenced by factors including, but not limited to, poor grades, inability to access curriculum, inability to interact with adults and peers, inability to maintain safety in school or inability to attend school (school refusal). Furthermore, the team, through the IEP process must identify that the Therapeutic Learning Center is the least restrictive environment through documented lack of progress in a less restrictive setting, record review, student observations, data collection, evaluations and student need for significant interventions in the areas of social emotional skills and self regulation strategies.

A more restrictive program request must include a meeting with the Special Education Director for review.

Exit Criteria

A student may exit the Therapeutic Learning Center once ability to make effective progress in the LRE is demonstrated and documented in IEP goals and objectives.

A systematic fading of supportive services will be implemented once a student demonstrates an ability to access academic content and all settings within the school environment (ex. Lunch, special classes, hallway transitions) with increased independence. In addition, students will demonstrate increased independence in self advocacy. Furthermore, through the IEP process, the team must identify through data collection that the student is able to access and participate in the LRE and maintain that participation over time.