

Inclusion Policy for Discovery Middle School

Discovery Middle School and the Vancouver School District shall provide every student with a free appropriate public education, from the age of three to twenty-one years old. The provision of a free appropriate public education includes regular or special education or related aids and services. Whether the student requires regular and/or special education and/or related aids and services, the student's educational program must be specifically designed to ensure that the student receives an educational program that is designed to meet his/her individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students are met and that the district comply with the requirements of Section 504. (R6151)

The Vancouver Public Schools will identify, evaluate and provide a free, appropriate public education to students who are disabled within the meaning of all state and federal statutes, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. In the event that a student's health, academic or social/emotional circumstances change, the parent should inform the school counselor or principal so that we can work together to provide appropriate instruction and supports for the student. (R5159, R5202)

Full Participation

Discovery Middle School has a variety of students with special needs, including some with learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, hearing disabilities, autism and speech disorders. Therefore we offer a full continuum of services to meet each student's needs.

Discovery Middle School mainstreams special education students in the majority of the eight subject areas. The only reason special education students would be removed from one of the eight areas is if their reading, writing and/or math are at a level that requires a more individualized teaching program to fulfill their IEP. If the special education student only needs math intervention, they will be mainstreamed into Language B as well as the other non-IEP subject areas.

Class sizes for our special education students in Language A, humanities, math and reading are kept at a lower student/teacher ratio to accommodate for students who require more individual attention. Additionally each special education teacher has a staff assistant to increase the amount of individual attention offered.

Social Supports

At Discovery Middle School we realize the importance of social-emotional opportunities for our students and therefore we offer a variety of such resources to enrich all of our students.

Family Community Resource Center

A major focus of the FCRC coordinator is to **establish relationships with students and families**, helping them create avenues for success. She is very involved in the community, on various Clark County coalitions, speak in the community frequently at churches, community groups and non-profits, all in service of building awareness and support for Discovery as well as accessing resources for our families.

The ultimate goal of the FCRC is to eliminate barriers to student success and to provide interventions and programming to support that goal. In so doing, the first step is to address **basic needs**. That is why we have two food programs (food boxes for emergencies and the weekly food bag program to support families over the weekend), a snack drawer, a clothing closet and school supply closet.

The second step in the process is **student engagement**. Our FCRC coordinator works hard to help students become engaged, involved, and connected at Discovery as well as to solve problems when they arise. She works with the peer mediation program, peer ambassador program, and runs several groups during lunch, co-facilitates Prevention Club, and connects students to sports at Discovery, tutoring, and other extracurricular activities. The goal is always to keep students engaged and successful.

The third component is **family/parent engagement**. Parent engagement can be challenging as many of our parents have not had positive relationships with traditional institutions (like schools). Also, some of our non-English speaking parents come from cultural traditions where families are not involved in the schools. The FCRC coordinator does a significant amount of reaching out to parents, meeting with them and working hard to connect them to the school and their children's education. She also provides parent support groups, resources, and access to technology to look for jobs, apply for state benefits, etc. She personally invites families to school activities like Math Night, Lit Night, their children's conferences, as well as tons of FCRC specific family events. Experience has shown how a personal invitation makes a HUGE difference by letting families know they are welcome and we would love to see them (even if their child has had many discipline problems). The FCRC coordinator also works a lot with community partners to provide opportunities for our non-English speaking parents like the English Language Conversation Circle that meets for 1 1/2 hours every Wednesday morning to help parents learn English. She also works to connect families to our administration in positive environments like coffee with the principal.

Peer Mediators

Peer Mediators are selected in 6th grade by being voted in by their peers. They are trained at the end of 6th grade and begin doing mediations in 7th grade and continue on into 8th grade.

Peer mediators help students solve personal conflicts. Any student can sign up to have a mediation. Two mediators meet with the students who have a dispute and help them identify the problem and come up with solutions.

The school counselors and our school psychologist oversee the program.

Peer Ambassadors

The Discovery Ambassador Program is a school wide program where counseling center staff connects Discovery students with new students who are enrolling at Discovery. The Discovery Ambassadors take the new students around to each of their classes, shows them around the school, and help answers their questions. In addition, they help new students adjust and feel comfortable at Discovery.

Discovery Ambassadors meet new students before school starts on their first day. The Discovery Ambassador shows the student to their first class and subsequently meet them at the end of each class to walk them to their next class and lunch. To help new students get used to Discovery, the Discovery Ambassadors will show them around for two days.

Discover Ambassadors are students that have been identified by teachers, counselors, and staff as students who are helpful, positive, and kind.

The program is designed to help new students become familiar with the Middle Years Programme, Discovery's rules, policies, schedules, classes, extra-curricular activities, and building. The program also helps new students feel comfortable in our school and connect to other positive students. In addition, it offers an additional leadership opportunity for current Discovery students to learn and grow.

Project Success

Project Success is an evidence based substance abuse prevention curriculum implemented by a Project Success Counselor. Included in this service is a one-week curriculum. All 6th grade students learn about the changes they will experience in adolescence, the risks associated with youth substance abuse and the developing brain, the disease concept of substance abuse, and healthy ways to cope with the stress that comes along with the transition to middle school. Sixth grade students also identify healthy and appropriate adults they can talk to when they experience stress.

All 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students are given the opportunity to self-refer into support groups run by the Project Success Counselor. Support groups are run in an 8-week rotation for students who need more information/education about why they should stay away from drugs, students who need intervention services, and students who are affected by somebody else's substance abuse. These groups are homogeneous groups that agree to confidentiality requirements in order to provide members with the safety and support of their peers while addressing these sensitive topics. The Project Success Counselor also runs a Prevention Club which works with a group of students to promote healthy choices

among their peers in the building and the community. The Project Success Counselor also works with Administration to enforce school policy around substance abuse and provides an in-house insight program for students who violate district policy. This reduces an eleven day suspension to a five day suspension with the agreement that the student participates in an 8-week support group.

The Project Success Program at Discovery is funded by the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery's Prevention Redesign Initiative. This program is designed to saturate a community with prevention services in order to reduce youth substance abuse over time. The Project Success Counselor works in partnership with a community coalition in order to address youth substance abuse from a community-wide perspective with a variety of evidence based substance abuse prevention strategies.

Learner Profile Monthly Awards

Each month the school focuses on one Learner Profile characteristic. At the end of the month, teachers nominate students to be recognized for demonstrating this characteristic. Students are honored with a certificate and have a postcard sent home to inform their parents of the learner profile their child is exhibiting and which staff member nominated them.

Community Service Hours

Students are encouraged to perform the following community service hours each year.

6th grade = 4 hours
7th grade = 8 hours
8th grade = 12 hours

Students who reach their recommended hours are recognized at our Excellence Assemblies in the fall and winter. These morning assemblies are scheduled before the day starts, and families are mailed an invitation. In the spring all students who have reached their community service hours are recognized at our End of Year Awards Assembly. This assembly is held on the last day of school and each student is called down to receive their citizenship medal that they proudly wear the rest of the day.

Colonel Terry Nelson Award

Colonel Terry Nelson was the first principal at Discovery Middle School who, as a leader and a veteran, embodies the ideals of service and the 10 learner profile characteristics for our students. Each year, the faculty nominate roughly ten 8th graders who have completed at least 12 hours of community service and have represented all learner profile characteristics throughout the year. One 8th grade boy and girl are awarded the honor by the staff members and have their names engraved on the plaque that is displayed proudly within the school for all to see.