

BELMONT PUBLIC SCHOOLS BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS

The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan for the Belmont Public Schools

The Belmont Public Schools are committed to ensuring that teachers and administrators make every effort to meet the learning needs of all students. Curriculum accommodations as well as differentiated instruction are part of every teacher's repertoire and allow for more students to remain in a regular education setting within the system. Belmont recognizes that all of our students have individual learning styles that at various times may require some kind of accommodation within the classroom or school environment. Consequently, in each of our schools, we have a variety of supports available to all students who may need them.

The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan includes the following elements:

System Wide

Professional Development

Knowing the importance of a highly qualified staff when meeting a wide variety of student learning needs, Belmont teachers participate in a broad array of staff development programs that are designed to expand their repertoire of instructional strategies.

Professional development is provided through three primary means:

- Professional Development meetings led by Principals and Directors focusing on the initiatives of the district and school goals.
- Professional Learning Teams that involve educators working together on a targeted area of need to improve learning for all students.
- Professional Development courses, seminars, workshops, and study groups led by BPS educators and partner organizations.

Professional Learning Teams are the vehicle for collaborative inquiry and action research through which self-selected teams of educators:

- Identify an area of student learning in need of improvement, supported by evidence and aligned with district and school goals.
- Write an inquiry question that articulates what they will do to improve student learning in this area.

- Share their collective expertise and review research in the field to determine best practices for implementation.
- Implement new instructional strategies and collect data to measure their effectiveness.
- Share findings and recommendations with colleagues at the PLT Conference, through the online reports, and at faculty, curriculum, and department meetings.
- Improve student learning.

Mentor Program – Teacher Induction Program

The Belmont Public Schools offer a New Teacher Induction Program for teachers new to the system until they achieve professional teacher status. A major part of the Induction Program is the Mentor Program. In addition, new teachers are asked to participate in a 36 hour course of study entitled, Studying Skillful Teaching.

Consultants

One form of support for teachers who are meeting the varied learning needs and styles of their students is consultant services. Whenever possible, building principals and program directors use a consultant model to support individual cases where student learning needs are particularly significant and complex.

Curriculum Design

The study of backward design through the work of Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins provides teachers with a curriculum framework that focuses on the essential questions to be addressed in a unit of study as well as the enduring understandings that all students must master. This focus on what is essential directs instruction and clarifies teacher expectations for student learning.

Data Analysis

The use of data to drive decision making about programs that meet student needs is present at all levels throughout the system. All teachers have access to student test data. Teachers and principals, as well as curriculum directors, use information such as MCAS data to make decisions about programs and instruction. In addition, administrators review data regularly to determine if all students have equal access to challenging programs within the school day as well as extra curricular programs offered after school.

English Language Learner Program

Currently, the school system provides support to students with limited English proficiency through individual and small group tutorials. However, students spend the bulk of their day in the regular education classroom with teachers trained in Shelter English Instruction. ELL Teachers and tutors assist in the classroom and support teacher work with these students. After school tutors at the middle and high schools provide additional support for students. A summer ELL camp for elementary students provides increased ELE opportunities for our younger students. Please see ELL Handbook for additional information.

Student Support Services

These services include guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and behavioral specialists who are available to work with students, families, and teachers.

Special education teachers also provide counsel and advice to teachers who are making curricular accommodations to meet student needs.

Individual Student Success Plans are written for all students who are in the failing or warning categories of MCAS results. These plans are used by teachers to ensure appropriate instruction in key learning areas for identified students.

Building Based

Elementary

Curriculum Meetings

All teachers meet six times during the school year to address curriculum topics aligned with district and school goals, as outlined by principals and curriculum specialists. These meetings focus on the introduction of new curriculum topics and provide opportunities to discuss and consider curriculum accommodations to ensure universal student access.

Learning Center

All elementary schools have a learning center or resource room where students can receive additional academic support and/or where teachers can consult with special education teachers regarding accommodations for curriculum and assessment.

Reading Specialists and Title I Reading Teachers

Reading specialists are present for support to teachers and students in grades 1 through 8. Two elementary schools have Title I targeted assistance programs and funding is used to provide additional reading support for identified students.

Curriculum Specialists

There are two K-4 curriculum specialists: one for English/language arts and social studies curricula, and one for math and science curricula. In addition to reviewing curricula and ensuring alignment to state and local standards, these specialists support educators in improving instruction and collecting/analyzing data to ensure that all students are mastering the curriculum.

Student Support Teams

TATs (teacher assistance teams) provide opportunities for teachers to come together to seek advice and support from their peers. These teams are made up of teachers, administrators, guidance and or school psychologist, and special education staff who work with the classroom teacher to review the learning needs of a student and who make suggestions for possible accommodations in instruction, curriculum content, and assessment.

Middle School

Curriculum Meetings

All teachers meet during the school year to address curriculum topics as outlined by curriculum directors. These meetings focus on the introduction of new curriculum topics and provide opportunities to discuss and consider curriculum accommodations to ensure universal student access.

Team Meetings

Teams of teachers, representing the various disciplines, meet regularly to discuss curriculum topics and learning issues for students whom they share. Special education teachers, guidance counselors, middle school administrators, and/or school psychologists may join teachers during this meeting time to design program assistance for particular students.

Reading Specialists

Reading specialists provide direct instruction for students in the lower school. They are available for assistance with identified students and will consult with classroom teachers to provide support.

Curriculum Directors

There are curriculum directors who oversee curriculum and support educators, grades 5-12, in all disciplines: English/language arts, math, science, social studies, foreign language, fine and performing arts, and physical education. In addition to reviewing curricula and ensuring alignment to state and local standards, these specialists support educators in improving instruction and collecting/analyzing data to ensure that all students are mastering the curriculum.

Learning Centers

All grade levels at the middle school are served by a learning center or resource room where students can receive additional academic support and/or where teachers can consult with special education teachers regarding accommodations for curriculum and assessment.

Student Support Teams

TATs (teacher assistance teams) provide opportunities for teachers to come together to seek advice and support from their peers. These teams are made up of teachers, administrators, guidance and or school psychologist, and special education staff who work with the classroom teacher to review the learning needs of a student and who make suggestions for possible accommodations in instruction, curriculum content, and assessment.

High School

Curriculum Meetings

All teachers meet during the school year to address curriculum topics as outlined by curriculum directors. These meetings focus on the introduction of new curriculum topics and provide opportunities to discuss and consider curriculum accommodations to ensure universal student access.

Curriculum Directors

There are curriculum directors who oversee curriculum and support educators, grades 5-12, in all disciplines: English/language arts, math, science, social studies, foreign language, fine and performing arts, and physical education. In addition to reviewing curricula and ensuring alignment to state and local standards, these specialists support educators in improving instruction and collecting/analyzing data to ensure that all students are mastering the curriculum.

Additional Instructional Time / MCAS support – English and Math

Based on data from state testing, principals, curriculum directors, and teachers identify students in need of additional assistance. At the high school courses are offered during the school day that are designed to help students meet the performance standards of MCAS.

Student Resource Teams

SRTs (student resource teams) provide opportunities for teachers to come together to seek advice and support from their peers. These teams are made up of teachers, administrators, guidance and or school psychologist, and special education staff who work with the classroom teacher to review the learning needs of a student and who make suggestions for possible accommodations in instruction, curriculum content, and assessment.

Learning Centers

All grade levels at the high school are served by a learning center or resource room where students can receive additional academic support and/or where teachers can consult with special education teachers regarding accommodations for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring is available at Belmont High School through the work of the National Honor Society.

Class Size Considerations

Curriculum directors and the BHS principal work with the Director of Student Services to build small class sizes of particular courses so that students with learning needs may receive additional assistance.

Sample List

The following is a partial list of the types of accommodations that teachers use to accommodate the learning needs of students. Please use this as a resource list when considering interventions for students requiring certain accommodations.

ACADEMIC:

- Schedule regular teacher extra-help sessions.
- Arrange regular homework time at home, scheduled and monitored by parents.

- Homework check sheet between teacher and parents.
- Provide extra time for testing.
- Use auditory and visual cues when presenting information.
- Use of graphic organizers to stimulate writing and organize production
- Previewing of important information and/or vocabulary words in a reading, prior to assignment
- Testing in an alternative setting
- Cueing before asking a question
- Use of word processor for all written work
- Critical classroom information presented orally and in writing
- Break long-term assignments into multiple parts, with intermediate due dates
- Use of spell-check for writing assignments
- The student will not be called upon unless the student raises his/her hand or is cued ahead
- Observation/consultation by special educator or specialist.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL:

- Consultation with school clinician
- Regular check-ins with guidance counselor
- Obtain releases to speak with outside professionals involved with family/student.
- Explore groups currently offered in school for appropriate placement.
- Arrange a mentor relationship with staff member.
- Inform coaches, club advisor, teachers of outstanding need and ask for additional support.
- Help student to self-assess emotional state related to school performance.
- Observation/consultation by psychologist, social worker, or counselor.

BEHAVIORAL:

- Provide preferential seating.
- Minimize distractions (mechanical noise, hallway, classmates) in the classroom.
- Develop behavioral program for student(s) in class, if appropriate.
- Establish visual cues between teacher and student to help with focus and attention.