



**Somerville Public Schools**

Education • Inspiration • Excellence

# District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)

*A Resource Guide for Teachers, Principals, Student Support Services Personnel,  
Paraprofessionals, and Parents to Meet the Needs of All Learners of the  
Somerville School District Learning Community*

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Dear Somerville Public Schools Community:

Our work as educators in this wonderfully diverse community is driven by our commitment to ensuring that we offer every student we serve a rich learning experience that nurtures their curiosity and allows them to thrive. Our mission and vision speak clearly to that commitment, and our equity-centered goals and approach to our work emphasize the importance of providing an educational experience and program that accommodates students' diverse learning needs.

The Somerville District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) describes our approach as a district to ensure that we provide an education environment that serves as the appropriate placement for all students. Embedded within this education environment are learning, social emotional, and other wraparound supports that provide students what they need to succeed, using a multi-tiered system of support. The DCAP also serves as an essential resource to assist schools in meeting this important responsibility.

Thank you for your partnership in this work.

Respectfully,

Mary E. Skipper, Superintendent

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**Our Mission:** Our District is a multicultural school community dedicated to the realization of the full intellectual, physical, social, and emotional potential of all students. In this pursuit, we shall maintain a safe environment that nurtures the curiosity, dignity and self-worth of each individual.

**Our Vision:** We believe in developing the whole child -- the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical potential of all students -- by providing students with the skills, opportunities, and resources that will nurture innovative ideas, foster pride in diversity, inspire students to become lifelong learners and empower them to enrich their communities.



## **Introduction to DCAP:**

Each school district in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is required to develop a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) to assist school leaders and teachers in planning and providing a general education program that is able to accommodate students' diverse learning needs and to avoid unnecessary referrals to special education.

The Massachusetts General Law related to DCAP is as follows:

### **New Section 38Q ½ added to Chapter 71**

“A school district shall adopt and implement a curriculum accommodation plan to assist principals in ensuring that all efforts have been made to meet students' needs in regular education. The plan shall be designed to assist the regular classroom teacher in analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles of all children in the regular education classroom and in providing appropriate services and support within the regular education program including, but not limited to, direct and systematic instruction in reading and provision of services to address the needs of children whose behavior may interfere with learning. The curriculum accommodation plan shall include provisions encouraging teacher mentoring and collaboration and parental involvement.”

### **Amendment made to Chapter 71, Section 59C**

The school council, including the school principal, shall meet regularly and shall assist in the identification of the educational needs of the students attending the school, make recommendations to the principal for the development, implementation, and assessment of the curriculum accommodation plan required pursuant to Section 38Q ½, shall assist in the review of the annual budget, and in the formulation of a school improvement plan. Essentially, the law requires that the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan be adopted by the district and individualized for each school building. The purpose of this planning is to continually strengthen and improve the general education program, for the benefit of *all* students.

The Somerville Public Schools DCAP addresses various strategies that will help to achieve that objective, including Assistance to Regular Education Classroom Teachers – such assistance includes such things as professional development that will help them to analyze and accommodate various students' learning needs, including students who are English Language Learners, and to manage students' behavior effectively.

*Support Services* – These include services that are available to students through the regular education program, including services to address the needs of students whose behavior may interfere with learning.

*Reading Services* – This means direct and systematic instruction in reading for all students.

*Mentoring and Collaboration* – This includes such things as mentoring new teachers and common planning time. Mentoring and collaboration is also provided to principals and other general education administrators in the form of consultation with the administrator of special education and other consultants hired by the district to assist the district in supporting its students.

*Parental Involvement* – This includes opportunities that encourage parental involvement in their children’s education such as school and district councils, PTA, SFLC (Somerville Family Learning Collaborative), school family liaisons, websites, connect-ed, and parent conferences.

The DCAP provides plans for each of the levels (elementary, middle, and high schools) describing the process for moving from the identification of a concern through communications with parents, staff collaboration, articulation of strategies for accommodations or intervention, and periodic review and evaluation of student progress.

The DCAP describes both formal and informal routes, working in concert with the MTSS process. In some instances, communication between parents and teachers will be effective in identifying issues and agreeing upon strategies to be implemented. In other situations, teams of educators will be involved in the process and a more formal written plan may result. Again, parent involvement is an important part of the process. Concerns that cannot be resolved by these routes, or where there is a lack of progress, may result in a recommendation for a formal evaluation to determine if a disability exists. Teachers in Somerville are continuously monitoring student progress looking for opportunities to make accommodations to facilitate learning and foster understanding.

## **Overview of Accommodations:**

Accommodations are changes in how a student gains access to information and demonstrates his/her learning. Accommodations do NOT change the instructional level, content, or performance criteria. Such changes are made to provide a student with equal access to learning along with an equal opportunity to be able to show what he/she knows or can do.

For many, the following list of accommodations would simply be thought of as best educational practices. Examples of accommodations may include changes to the following:

1. Presentation and/or format and procedures (visual models vs. lecture)
2. Instructional strategies
3. Time/scheduling
4. Environment
5. Equipment
6. Architecture
7. Test taken orally
8. Large print textbooks
9. Additional time allowed to take tests
10. A locker with an adapted lock
11. Weekly home-school communication tools, such as notebook, daily logbook, etc.
12. Peer support for note-taking (or teacher prepared notes)
13. Lab sheets with highlighted instructions
14. Graph paper to assist in organizing and lining up math problems
15. Tape-record lectures
16. Use of a computer/word processor for writing assignments

## **Personnel - Support Services Available To All Students Through Regular Education:**

- Guidance Counselors
- Reading Specialists (Title I)
- Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapist/Speech-Language Pathologist –consultation contacts for regular education staff may conduct classroom observations of students for the purpose of informal screening(s), parent/home consult capacity
- Library Media Specialists
- Nurses – offer consultation to staff, training of personnel to enhance awareness of what to watch for in psychopharmacological effects, and practice of universal precautions in student injury situations, direct service to individual students and staff, vision and hearing screening, serves on Teacher Assistances as needed
- Redirect Teachers/Dean of Students – A role designed to address behavior issues early and prevent further disruptions and referrals.
- In-School and Afterschool Tutors
- School Psychologist
- School Social Worker(s) – provides teacher consultation, support to student and families, liaison for social/community agencies.
- Summer Program - a 4-week program that provides research-based interventions in math and literacy
- Embedded therapy services through Home for Little Wanderers and Riverside Community Health

## **Accommodations, Modifications, and Interventions that May Be Recommended, But Not Limited to Regular Education Students:**

### **Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment Strategies**

- Edwin Teaching and Learning System for End of Unit Formative Assessments
- Provision of multi-modal presentations of materials: visual, auditory, “hands-on”
- Utilize differentiated instruction and assignments (academic choice projects)
- Develop alternate assignments
- Repeat or reteach concepts (spiraled review)
- Offer peer teaching/group activities
- Model content area reading strategies (directly taught)
- Provide individual help in the classroom (one on one conferences with students with specific feedback)
- Include study skills strategies
- Utilize transition cues
- Develop teacher-student contacts
- Incorporate positive reinforcement incentives/rewards
- Use of technology/computer-assisted instruction ([www.unitedstreaming.com](http://www.unitedstreaming.com))
- Provision of challenge projects encouraging student creativity
- Offer of oral/untimed testing
- Use of multiple intelligence/learning style approaches DIFFERENTIATION
- Model use of graphic organizers ([www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org))
- Develop integrated curriculum projects

### **Behavioral Intervention Strategies**

- Classroom interventions by a guidance counselor, Dean of Students and Redirect Teacher
- Arrange seating accommodations
- Develop behavioral intervention plans (BIP) using FBAs
- Utilize charts/graphs to monitor expectations and provide a visual for student self-check monitoring (self-regulation)
- Adjust classroom management strategies
- \*Observation and coaching by district-wide general ed. behaviorist
- Facilitate parent/support communication
- Include energizers (creative movement, Brain Gym, yoga)
- Consult with school psychologist, social worker, special needs staff
- Individual and small group guidance counseling (“lunch bunch”, mediation, social circles)

### **Organizational Strategies Directly Modeled and Taught**

- Provide a school-wide agenda system

- Develop flexible/modified schedule (including daily X-block for intervention/enrichment)
- Utilize flexible grouping
- Utilize contract learning
- Utilize team teaching – cooperative teaching
- Implement a progress reporting system
- Consult with and co-plan by grade level teams (common planning time)

### **Intervention/Remedial/Challenge Strategies**

- Provide test-taking strategies and practice
- Utilize miscue analysis/prescriptive teaching
- Develop study skills strategies
- Consult with teacher mentors
- Provide after school help (afterschool tutorial program)
- Provide in-school x-block tutoring (through Title I)
- Software/technology support (ex. FASTMATH, Zearn, LaLiLo, Lexia)
- Utilize peer buddy systems

## **Direct and Systematic Instruction In Reading for All Students:**

Somerville's current Literacy Plan includes the implementation of many instruments to ensure effective reading instruction for all students. These include:

- Foundations Phonics Program K-2
- Multiple assessments for reading (DIBELS, Fountas & Pinnell, PAST Phonological Awareness, Beginning/Advanced Decoding Survey) and Common Formative Assessments)
- Balanced Literacy/Readers Workshop Program & Units – K-8
- Minimum of 90 minutes of ELA instruction daily (2 hours in K-3)
- Flexible grouping and guided reading instruction
- Daily X-Block to address difficulties in reading
- Extensive in-school, after-school, and summer tutoring for struggling readers
- Direct services through reading specialists (grade 1-3)
- Summer reading program
- Professional development offered for all teachers and paraprofessionals in supporting struggling readers
- Family literacy programs
- English language classes for parents of English Language Learners
- Grade level data meetings regularly to analyze progress monitoring data

## **Core Curriculum & Professional Development:**

Somerville Public Schools offers regular intensive professional development to staff around implementing the Core Curriculum in a way that helps teachers address the variability in student learning needs, including students who are English Language Learners. This includes:

**Aligned Curriculum To Common Core Standards/MA Frameworks**– These include built-in accommodations and resources to support various student needs.

**Coaching** – Our mathematics and ELA coaches work closely with teachers in each building to ensure that instruction is delivered in a way that is rich and accommodates a diversity of learners.

**District Professional Development** – We offer a rich array of courses and workshops throughout the school year and the summer. Many of these are geared towards promoting Universal Design for Learning, research-based practices for supporting ELLs, and for providing all teachers more expertise in working with struggling students regardless of whether a disability is present.

## **Mentoring & Collaboration:**

- Formal teacher induction and mentoring program to assist new teachers and administrators
- Professional development programs provide teachers the opportunity to exchange ideas on instructional issues and differentiating instruction
- Regular grade level and department meetings
- Observation and evaluation
- Common Planning Time
- 24 hours of professional development each year
- Supporting each other by example and experience or by working together

## **Parent Involvement:**

This includes strategies that encourage parents to be informed and involved in their children's education:

- School PTA
- School Council
- Use of agenda books, having parents sign off on assignments
- Standards-Based Progress Reports/Report Cards
- Quarterly parent conferences
- Student Handbook
- Summer Reading Program
- At-Risk Survey
- Website
- Connect-Ed
- SFLC (Somerville Family Learning Collaborative) – Provides workshops to parents on a variety of topics, such as helping students with behaviors to supporting their reading progress

## **Community Agencies To Assist All Schools and Families:**

- Riverside Mental Health
- Tufts University students volunteering as tutors
- Somerville Health Department
- Somerville Mental Health Clinic providing assessment, counseling, therapy referrals and consultation
- Mediation Program
- MPY Partnership (Middlesex Partnership for Youth)

## **Useful Websites for Additional information:**

### **CAST Universal Design for Learning**

[http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac\\_diffinstruc.html](http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_diffinstruc.html)

Not all students are alike. Based on this knowledge, differentiated instruction applies an approach to teaching and learning so that students have multiple options for taking in information and making sense of ideas. The model of differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their approach to teaching and adjusting the curriculum and presentation of information to learners rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum. Classroom teaching is a blend of whole-class, group and individual instruction. Differentiated Instruction is a teaching theory based on the premise that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse students in classrooms.

<http://www.pacelearning.com/library/pdf/reluctantlrnr.pdf>

Educators from elementary to secondary levels have met Bill Bright and Sam Slack. These students have features we recognize. The first student, Bill Bright, comes to class on time, has his homework done, eagerly raises his hand to answer questions, volunteers to go to the chalkboard, does his work neatly. His teachers say he is a motivated student. And they love him. Our other student, Sam Slack, comes to class tardy (when he comes at all), seldom does his homework, sits in the back row, daydreams. His teachers say he is an unmotivated student. And they leave him alone. Bill Bright made A's and B's, and passed easily to the next grade. Sam Slack made D's and F's, failed, went to the principal's office, became a behavior problem, and is now on the "dropout track." Sam Slack may well be lost as a member of the student community and possibly lost as a productive member of the society we live in 3/4 a society, which places a high value on formal education as the entry ticket to most jobs and careers.

### **Proven Methods**

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/index.html?src=ov>

*No Child Left Behind* puts special emphasis on determining what educational programs and practices have been proven effective through rigorous scientific research. Federal funding is targeted to support these programs and teaching methods that work to improve student learning and achievement.