

SPECIAL EDUCATION AT GUNN

Gunn has a long history of providing services for special needs students. Special and general education teachers have worked collaboratively for many years to ensure that all students can learn and progress. Currently, Special Education services are provided under the federal IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act), passed in 2004, and California laws and regulations. These have resulted from inequities suffered by some individuals in the past and include:

-The right to a free and appropriate public education.

-The right to placement in the least restrictive learning environment, to the program with the least restrictive environment, and the right to enjoy, insofar as possible, the same variety of programs as are available to the nonhandicapped. Estimates of the numbers of students with disabilities range from 10 to 20%.

Approximately 10% of Gunn students receive Special Education services, with the majority having learning disabilities. Some characteristics of learning disabilities are provided below.

1. Types of programs available at Gunn. Programs run the gamut, from pull-out programs through one or more periods per day of Special Education assistance. Students within the same program may have a great variety of needs. However, Specialized Core Program (SCP) students generally spend more of their day in Special Education classrooms learning core curriculum than do Resource (RS) students. Students with emotional or behavioral issues may require additional support services. Programs and personnel are as follows:

Physically Handicapped (may provide SCP or Resource services to students, depending on student needs)

Orthopedically Handicapped and OHI	Janet Fox	L13	(8283)
Visually Handicapped	Jennifer Dorwin, Suzanne Balmaceda	L5	(NA)
Hearing Impaired	Sharon Yost	RC4	(8250)

Specific Learning Disabled

Language/Speech	Judy Niizawa, Amy Krehbiel	L13	(8236)
Resource Specialist, IS	Judy Buttrill	RC2	(8257)
Resource Specialist	Terry Jacobs	T5	(7962)
Resource Specialist	Karen Salzer, Dana Winitsky	MP1-15	(8251)
Resource Specialist	Jason Roberts	T6	(7963)
Resource Specialist & LH SCP	Shivani Pulimamidi	MP1-14	(858-0921)
Learning Handicapped (SCP)	Katherine Byrne	T8	(7945)
Language Handicapped (SCP)	Joanna Hubenthal, Dana Winitsky	RC5	(NA)
<u>Post-Secondary Program</u>	Joanna Hubenthal	P21	(NA)

Social/Emotional/Behavior & Other Support Services

<u>Counseling</u>	Lisa DiMarino	RC7	(NA)
<u>Additional Support Services</u>	Diane Wilson, Angela Huerta, Gloria Garcia	T7	(7944)

2. Eligibility Criteria for Specific Learning Disabilities. There are very strict eligibility criteria for admission to Special Education programs within the state of California. Generally, standardized tests must be used to assess students' ability and achievement and there must be a severe discrepancy between the two for students to qualify. In order to be placed in a Special Education program, it must be determined that the student's needs cannot be met through modification of the regular education program.

3. Common characteristics of Specific Learning Disabled (learning/language handicapped) students:

-Short attention span/distractibility	-Difficulty in reading, writing, math, spelling	-Hyperactivity or lethargy
-Impulsive behavior	-Extreme variation in day-to-day performance	
-Difficulty in remembering	-Test performance below expectations	
-Difficulty in understanding oral or written instructions	-Difficulty in organizing or expressing thoughts	
-Poor fine motor coordination	-Poor organization of tasks	

4. How to refer. Referrals should be directed to the counselor. Counselors screen all referrals through the IEP (Individual Educational Planning) Team, consisting of counselors, administrators, the school psychologist, Special Education teachers as well as parents and general education teachers, as needed.

5. Teacher involvement in the referral and placement process. Teachers will receive a request for information regarding student performance. The team studies all information teachers provide.

THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO ALL SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS ON THE GUNN CAMPUS.

6. Coordination. Communication is the key. Lists of Special Education students in each teachers' class are sent each semester so that they may be aware of special needs. Each teacher receives a handbook detailing the needs of each Special Education student in his or her classes. Special Education teachers contact regular education teachers to monitor student progress and to assist with concerns teachers may have. Regular education teachers are often the first to realize when a special education student is in trouble. Send us a note, call, knock on the door; we will respond. Special education teachers are available to talk if you have concerns.

7. Attendance and discipline procedures. Special Education students are accountable for obeying all regular school attendance and discipline procedures unless there are mitigating circumstances related to the student's handicap.
8. Location of Individual Education Plans. These can be found in the Cumulative File in the Registrar's Office or in the Special Education Teacher's file.

Special Education Program Descriptions

Special education programs at Gunn range from pull-out programs through one or more periods per day of special assistance. There are programs on campus to serve the 1) physically handicapped (through Special Day Classes for the Hearing Impaired, and the Orthopedically and Visually Handicapped); and 2) the specific learning disabled. Students in the latter category are served in the Language/Speech Program (one part-time teacher), the Resource Specialist Program (one part-time and four full-time teachers with aides), and three-plus Learning Handicapped Special Day classes. The total number of special education students at Gunn is approximately 175, with the majority enrolled in the Resource Specialist Program. By the time they have reached high school, most students with disabilities have already been identified. However, some students with learning or emotional problems may have been identified earlier and dropped out of special education programs. These students often are referred at the high school level if they are experiencing difficulty. Counselors screen and funnel all referrals through the IEP (Individual Educational Planning) Team, which consists of counselors, administrators, the school psychologist, and Special Education teachers as well as parents and general education teachers.

If there is a suspected emotional disability, a clinical psychological assessment will be completed. For a suspected learning disability, eligibility criteria require, except in certain cases, that standardized tests be used to assess students' ability and achievement, that there be a severe discrepancy between the two for students to qualify and that the discrepancy be due to a processing disorder and not to other factors. In order to be placed in a Special Education program, it must be determined that the student's needs cannot be met through modification of the regular education program. Once eligibility is determined, an IEP is developed specifying student's strengths and weaknesses, outlining goals and objectives and designating services so that a student may be appropriately placed and served in a Special Education program. An individualized transition plan (ITP) is also developed in order to ease student transition into post-secondary life.

Once a student is enrolled in a special education program, special education teachers work with counseling staff to insure student access to the core curriculum, coordinate student schedules and to facilitate transitions in the school program. Students within Special Day Classes may be mainstreamed from one to several periods per day, with core curriculum instruction in certain subjects being provided by the Special Day Class teacher. Students in the Resource Program are generally mainstreamed for all but one period a day.

Within the special education classroom, instruction is individualized to address the goals and objectives within the IEP and to draw upon the student's strengths to remediate or compensate for his weaknesses. There is an emphasis throughout the Department, however, on the teaching of learning strategies, development of critical thinking skills, enhancement of self-esteem, and exploration and instruction in vocational areas.

The mainstream curriculum at Gunn is generally appropriate to career goals; however, for students who are not college bound the total curriculum could provide more vocational options. Students are challenged to learn to their highest potential, but due to the highly competitive academic environment, special needs students sometimes experience frustration. A particular area of concern has been that a number of social studies texts have high level readability ratings.

Special education services provide support to students in their acquisition of the mainstream core curriculum through tutoring, learning strategies instruction, basic skills remediation and articulation with mainstream teachers, parents and other professionals. Students benefit from special equipment such as talking computers, taped books, desk-top spell-checkers and augmentative communication systems. The site is wheelchair-accessible.

In supporting students within mainstream classes, special education teachers provide information to mainstream teachers about the needs, capabilities and learning processes of the special needs students. Special and general education teachers and parents work together to determine classroom modifications which may be necessary for students to succeed. Some of these include classroom seating arrangements, extended time on tests, differential grading standards, provision of written material along with lecture information, and use of cooperative learning groups. As the term continues, the special education teacher monitors student progress and works with the general education teacher to deal with any problems which may have arisen.

Students have been tracked after graduation. The great majority of students who graduated went on to either a community or a four-year college, with a few transitioning into work or the military.