

Sigsbee Charter School Exceptional Student Education FAQs

Q. How are individual student's needs met?

At SCS we honor the individuality of each child. Our instructional philosophy is based on knowing we are teaching individual children, not simply a set curriculum. Teachers use developmental assessments to determine each child's academic strengths and needs. These assessments drive classroom instruction and ensure students are presented with material "just right" for them. Teachers differentiate lessons based on the students' readiness for the material, learning style, and interest. Some SCS students have identified exceptionalities. These students receive services through our ESE (Exceptional Student Education) programs.

Q. What is differentiated curriculum?

Students at SCS are not only culturally diverse; they also learn in different ways, have varying interests and respond to instruction differently. As a result, teachers offer a differentiated curriculum to maximize student growth and engagement in learning. Differentiated instruction includes responding to students' individual needs by varying learning activities and materials based on interest, learning style and ability. It includes assessing student readiness, grouping students for instruction, and implementing on-going assessments to ensure that students' individual strengths and needs are being addressed.

Q. What is Balance Literacy?

Balanced Literacy is a holistic, child-centered framework for reading and writing instruction. In a balanced literacy classroom, instruction is driven by careful assessment and tailored to the individual needs of each child. Language skills are not taught through textbooks and worksheets, which often isolate and decontextualize specific skills; rather, skills are embedded into meaningful context, and authentic texts are utilized. At SCS, our balanced literacy program uses a workshop format and includes whole class, small group, and individual instruction.

Q. How does Sigsbee Charter School measure student growth?

SCS uses continuums to measure student literacy growth over the course of a school year. Students are formally assessed at the beginning and end of the school year in Writing, using a rubric, and in Reading, using the DRA2. Throughout the course of the school year teachers use informal assessments (running records, anecdotal notes and benchmark writing assignments) to monitor student progress and drive instructional decisions for each student independently.

SCS uses the Go Math! Big Idea Assessments to measure student growth and benchmark assessments to monitor progress while exploring new concepts.

Q. What if there are concerns about a child's progress?

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an array of procedures that can be used to determine if and how students respond to specific changes in instruction. RTI provides process and structure for school teams in designing, implementing, and evaluating educational interventions. The essential elements of an RTI approach are:

1. The provision of scientific, research-based instruction and interventions in general education
2. Monitoring and measurement of student progress in response to the instruction and interventions
3. Use of these measures of student progress to shape instruction and make educational decisions.

Q. Do you offer special education services?

Yes, we address the unique needs of students with varying exceptionalities. In Florida, boys and girls who have special learning needs because of a disability are called “exceptional students”. The special help they are given at school is called “exceptional student education”. This is referred to as “ESE” services. The purpose of exceptional student education is to help the child progress in school, meet his or her goals, and prepare for life after school.

Q. What is an IEP (Individual Education Plan)?

The IEP is a written plan (legal document) for the special education of a child with a disability. It describes the child and what the school will do to give the child the services he or she needs. A new IEP must be developed every 12 months or sooner if there is a change to be made. The following people must be present at an IEP meeting: a person from the school system, the ESE teacher, the student’s general education teacher, the staffing specialist, the parents or legal guardians of the student, and the student, if 14 years or older must be invited. Others may attend at the request of the parent, or by the school’s request, such as principal, guidance counselor, occupational therapist, speech- language pathologist.

Q. What is a 504 Plan?

Section 504 is a civil rights act, mandating equal access. In order to be eligible for an accommodation plan, the student must have a physician documented physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more life activities, such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, and learning. Any student may be referred by parents, physicians, teachers, counselors, administrators, who are knowledgeable about the child being recommended for a 504 plan. All referrals must be submitted in writing to the school’s Section 504 Coordinator, and at an SST meeting, the required documentation will be reviewed and prepared. The accommodations will be developed in a document known as a “section 504 accommodation plan”, which is a federal document.

Q. Do charter schools have to follow ADA laws?

Yes, this is a federal law which protects the rights of individuals with disabilities and prohibits discrimination against all individuals with disabilities.

Q. Do you have a gifted program?

At Sigsbee Charter School, staff provides challenging learning experiences that are designed to meet the unique learning profile of a broad range of learners through a differentiated curriculum. A continuum of opportunities within the classroom allows students to engage in complex subject matter, providing a challenging and rigorous content as they advance in grade level. In addition, SCS prides itself on the various enrichment opportunities made available to students in programs such as GEMS (Girls Excelling in Math and Science), Odyssey of the Mind, Strategies Lab, and Wednesday enrichment courses. SCS follows the MCSD identification process for children who exhibit exceptional performance capability in academic, intellectual, and creative endeavors. Information about the identification process can be found in the main office. Identified students are supported in meeting the goals of their gifted education plans through a classroom consultation model.

Q. Can Sigsbee Charter School select its student population?

No. Sigsbee Charter School (SCS) is a publically funded charter **school of choice** meaning that students and their families choose to attend the school. SCS is open to all students regardless of race, color, national or ethnic origin. However, in order to uphold our vision and mission of supporting the transient military child, priority enrollment is granted to all eligible dependents of active duty military members.

For more information on charter schools, visit http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/usc_docs/index.htm or read our application and lottery process on the home page at www.sigsbee.org