**Our Mission**

Our mission at Hardaway High School is to develop enthusiastic, life-long learners who are productive, contributing members of a global society.

Hardaway High School is committed to providing educational experiences that will enable each student to become a lifelong learner, enter the work force with necessary skills and achieve academic and personal potential.

As such, we aim to include students of all backgrounds and abilities in as rigorous a classroom environment as possible in order to best serve their preparation for the future whether it be in the IB Diploma Programme, the IB Career-Related Programme, as an IB Course Students, or as a traditional student.

Further information regarding inclusive practices can be found at the district level at <https://www.muscogee.k12.ga.us/Documents/TeachingandLearning/Student_Progression_Final_031818.pdf> or by contacting the district-level coordinator at:

Program for Exceptional Students

Muscogee County Public Education Center

2960 Macon Road

Columbus, GA 31906

(706) 748-2230

**Student Support Team**

Student Support Team (SST) is a school-based, solution-focused team designed to support the learning or behavioral needs of regular education students. SST committees convene on a regular basis and can be initiated by parent, teacher, or other school related professional. SST chairs at each school are the contact persons for scheduling a student for the SST process.

The SST works to decide which specific behavioral or academic skills would most likely bring success for the student and they develop a plan to begin to target thoseone or two critical skills.

At this level teamwork and communication becomes even more important as consistent family, school and sometimes community supports are what is necessary for success. Follow-up SST meetings occur to evaluate how effectively the plan was carried out and if the plan should be altered, intensified or is no longer needed.

**Section 504**

Section 504 plans are available to students with a physical or mental impairment which impacts a major life activity (learning, self-help skills, walking, etc.). A 504 Plan outlines reasonable accommodations, regular or special education, related aids and services to insure the student’s civil rights are being met.

**Notice Rights of Students and Parents Under Section 504**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, commonly referred to as "Section 504," is a nondiscrimination statute enacted by the United States Congress. The purpose of Section 504 is to prohibit discrimination and to assure that disabled students have educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided to non-disabled students.

The implementing regulations for Section 504 as set out in 34 CFR Part 104 provide parents and/or students with the following rights:

* Your child has the right to an appropriate education designed to meet his or her individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students. (34 CPR 104.33)
* Your child has the right to free educational services except for those fees that are imposed on non-disabled students or their parents. Insurers and similar third parties who provide services not operated by or provided by the recipient are not relieved from an otherwise valid obligation to provide or pay for services provided to a disabled student. (34 CFR 104.33)
* Your child has a right to participate in an educational setting (academic and nonacademic) with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate to his or her needs. (34 CFR 104.34)
* Your child has a right to facilities, services, and activities that are comparable to those provided for non-disabled students. (34 CFR 104.34)
* Your child has a right to an evaluation prior to a Section 504 determination of eligibility. (34 CPR 104.35)
* You have the right to not consent to the school system's request to evaluate your child. (34 CFR 104.35)
* You have the right to ensure that evaluation procedures, which may include testing, conform to the requirements of (34 CFR 104.35)
* You have the right to ensure that the school system will consider information from a variety of sources as appropriate, which may include aptitude and achievement tests, grades, teacher recommendations and observations, physical conditions, social or cultural background, medical records, and parental recommendations. (34 CFR 104.35)
* You have the right to ensure that placement decisions are made by a group of persons, including persons knowledgeable about your child, the meaning of the evaluation data, the placement options, and the legal requirements for least restrictive environment and comparable facilities. (34 CFR 104.35)
* If your child is eligible under Section 504, your child has a right to periodic reevaluations, including prior to any subsequent significant change of placement. (34 CFR 104.35)
* You have the right to notice prior to any actions by the school system regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child. (34 CFR 104.36)
* You have the right to examine your child's educational records. (34 CFR 104.36)
* You have the right to an impartial hearing with respect to the school system's actions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, with opportunity for parental participation in the hearing and representation by an attorney. (34CFR 104.36)
* You have the right to receive a copy of this notice and a copy of the school system's impartial hearing procedure upon request. (34 CFR 104.36)
* If you disagree with the decision of the impartial hearing officer (school board members and other district employees are not considered impartial hearing officers), you have a right to a review of that decision according to the school system's impartial hearing procedure. (34CFR 104.36)

You have the right to, at any time; file a complaint with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

**Section 504 Procedural Safeguards**

Overview: Any student or parent or guardian ("grievant") may request an impartial hearing due to the school system's actions or inactions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement under Section 504. Requests for an impartial hearing must be in writing to the school system's Section 504 Coordinator; however, a grievant's failure to request a hearing in writing does not alleviate the school system's obligation to provide an impartial hearing if the grievant orally requests an impartial hearing through the school system's Section 504 Coordinator. The school system's Section 504 Coordinator will assist the grievant in completing the written Request for Hearing.

Hearing Request: The Request for the Hearing must include the following:

a) The name of the student.

b) The address of the residence of the student.

c) The name of the school the student is attending.

d) The decision that is the subject of the hearing

e) The requested reasons for review.

f) The proposed remedy sought by the grievant.

g) The name and contact information of the grievant.

Within 10 business days from receiving the grievant's Request for Hearing, the Section 504 Coordinator will acknowledge the Request for Hearing in writing and schedule a time and place for a hearing. If the written Request for Hearing does not contain the necessary information noted above, the Section 504 Coordinator will inform the grievant of the specific information needed to complete the request. All timelines and processes will be stayed until the Request for Hearing contains the necessary information noted above.

Mediation: The school system may offer mediation to resolve the issues detailed by the grievant in his or her Request for Hearing. Mediation is voluntary and both the grievant and school system must agree to participate. The grievant may terminate the mediation at any time. If the mediation is terminated without an agreement, the school system will follow the procedures for conducting an impartial hearing without an additional Request for Hearing.

Hearing Procedures:

a) The Section 504 Coordinator will obtain an impartial review official who will conduct a hearing within 45 calendar days from the receipt of the grievant's Request for Hearing unless agreed to otherwise by the grievant or a continuance is granted by the impartial review official.

b) Upon a showing of good cause by the grievant or school system, the impartial review official, at his or her discretion, may grant a continuance and set a new hearing date. The request for a continuance must be in writing and copied to the other party.

c) The grievant will have an opportunity to examine the child's educational records prior to the hearing.

d) The grievant will have the opportunity to be represented by legal counsel at his or her own expense at the hearing and participate, speak, examine witnesses, and present information at the hearing. If the grievant is to be represented by legal counsel at the hearing, he or she must inform the Section 504 Coordinator of that fact in writing at least 10 calendar days prior to the hearing. Failure to notify the Section 504 Coordinator in writing of representation by legal counsel shall constitute good cause for continuance of the hearing.

e) The grievant will have the burden of proving any claims he or she may assert. When warranted by circumstances or law, the impartial hearing officer may require the recipient to defend its position/decision regarding the claims (i.e. A recipient shall place a disabled student in the regular educational environment operated by the recipient unless it is demonstrated by the recipient that the education of the person in the regular environment with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. 34 C.F.R. § l04.34). One or more representatives of the school system, who may be an attorney, will attend the hearing to present the evidence and witnesses, respond to the grievant testimony and answer questions posed by the review official.

f) The impartial review official shall not have the power to subpoena witnesses, and the strict rules of evidence shall not apply to hearings. The impartial review official shall have the authority to issue pre-hearing instructions, which may include requiring the parties to exchange documents and names of witnesses to be present.

g) The impartial review official shall determine the weight to be given any evidence based on its reliability and probative value.

h) The hearing shall be closed to the public.

i) The issues of the hearing will be limited to those raised in the written or oral request for the hearing.

j) Witnesses will be questioned directly by the party who calls them. Cross-examination of witnesses will be allowed. The impartial review official, at his or her discretion, may allow further examination of witnesses or ask questions of the witnesses.

k) Testimony shall be recorded by court reporting or audio recording at the expense of the recipient. All documentation related to the hearing shall be retained by the recipient.

l) Unless otherwise required by law, the impartial review official shall uphold the action of school system unless the grievant can prove that a preponderance of the evidence supports his or her claim.

m) Failure of the grievant to appear at a scheduled hearing unless prior notification of absence was provided and approved by the impartial review official or just cause is shown shall constitute a waiver of the right to a personal appearance before the impartial review official.

Decision: The impartial review official shall issue a written determination within 20 calendar days of the date the hearing concluded. The determination of the impartial review official shall not include any monetary damages or the award of any attorney's fees.

Review: If not satisfied with the decision of the impartial review official, any party may pursue any right of review, appeal, cause of action or claim available to them under the law or existing state or federal rules or regulations.

**Special Education**

All personnel responsible for serving a student with a disability must review and maintain a working knowledge of the students Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Behavior Intervention Plan to include any updates or additional processes i.e. Manifestations, Eligibility Redeterminations and Amendments. This is a continuing obligation requiring district personnel to take reasonable steps to maintain a current working knowledge of the student’s needs as the student’s IEP and other program documents are modified.

It is the responsibility of the personnel to contact the School Principal or their designee if they do not have access to the information, understand the information or have questions concerning the requirements described above.

The special education department is headed by the Director of the Program for Exceptional Students. The department also includes a team of instructional specialists, itinerant teachers, occupational and physical therapists, related service personnel, and secretarial staff.

Instructional specialists are trained to provide leadership and instructional methods/techniques of instruction to teachers and parents in the following areas:

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Specific Learning Disabilities

Orthopedic and Other Health Impairments

Sensory Impairments

Speech and Language Disorders

Autism

Traumatic Brain Injury

Significantly Developmentally Delayed

Mild, Moderate, Severe, and Profound Intellectual Disabilities

The Director for the Program for Exceptional Students has many responsibilities which include motivation, guidance and direction to teachers, students and other personnel involved in the Program for Exceptional Students. Instructional specialists serve each school in the district respective to its needs. Staff cooperate with other agencies such as the Woodall Program, Department of Family and Children Services, State Hospitals, Local Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, Goodwill Industries, Department of Human Resources, Court Services and Group Homes. We serve all students with disabilities ages 3-21. The preschool special education program, known as the STEPS Program, serves identified students with disabilities beginning on the child's third birthday.

Instructional Specialists are Also Involved in:

Student Assignments

Program Development and Evaluation

Transportation of Students

Community Based Training

In-service on Utilizing State of Georgia GPS Objectives

Assistive Technology

IEP/Placement Committee Meetings

Parent Conferences

IEP and Curriculum Development

Curriculum Adaptations

Assisting in the Supervision of System Wide Programs

All Muscogee County Special Education Instructional Specialists are certified by the State Department of Education. Each instructional specialist has a minimum of a Masters Degree in his/her field of service.

**Process of Implementation & Communication of Inclusion Policy**

All teachers of any student who falls under one of the above categories is presented with proper documentation regarding appropriate instructional modifications and accommodations at the outset of each academic year. Every teacher is expected to follow the plan to the letter in terms of offering accommodations and modifications to the student in question.

All students who are identified to fall under one of the above categories, are in the 8th grade in Muscogee County School District, and will be attending Hardaway in the following year are required to attend a transition meeting at which parents, teachers, and students meet with a liaison from Hardaway who has been trained with regard to IB philosophies, practices, and available accommodations who explains the range of services available at Hardaway within the IB Programme and works to develop an appropriate transitional plan.

All students who are identified to fall under one of the above categories and is transferring into Hardaway High School from outside Muscogee County School District will meet with parents and teachers, including the IB Coordinator, the LEA Facilitator, and/or a trained case manager, to review past documentation and communicate services available at Hardaway within the IB Programme and develop a plan for the first year in attendance.

All students who are identified to fall under one of the above categories are required to meet with the appropriate team of teachers as well as parents to re-evaluate annually. This team shall include the IB Coordinator and a case manager who has been trained and familiarized by the IB Coordinator with regard to IB philosophies, practices, and available accommodations. This case manager will also periodically collaborate with each of the student’s classroom teachers to provide necessary accommodations and ensure that the student is receiving adequate support for his/her identified needs.