

## 4. Special Populations

- a. **Describe in detail how the charter school will meet the needs of all students including those who may be:**
- **at risk;**

The term “at risk” is a challenge to define as it has many meanings and little agreement about which students are covered. PIACS founders agree with Swadener & Lubeck (1995, “Children and families at promise: Deconstructing the discourse of risk.” SUNY Press), who challenged the deficit-model and instead focus on the strengths and resilience-building skills for all students “at promise.” Students with the greatest promise include those who are: eligible for free and reduced lunch; students with unique abilities and disabilities (emotional, developmental, learning, physical disabilities and gifted and talented abilities); students of color (particularly African, African-American, Latino/a, Indigenous/Native American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial students); students who identify as lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgendered, intersex, queer, and questioning; and students who have nondominant appearances, family types, religious/spiritual beliefs, etc.

All Princeton International Academy Charter School (PIACS) students will be assessed for their promise in terms of academic, career, college access, emotional, ethical, social/cultural and physical skills competencies by teachers and the School Counseling program at the beginning of the year, at regular intervals during the school year, and at the end of each school year. Classroom teachers and the school counselors will ensure appropriate support services are available within the school such as individual and group counseling, developmental school counseling curriculum lessons, and semi-annual academic, career, and college goal-setting and advising by the school’s certified school counselor for all students. PIACS will focus on equity in the school and students (with the greatest promise, formerly known as “at risk,”) who are on free- and reduced-lunch, who have disabilities, who are dual language learners, and students of color will receive additional resources as needed to ensure their school performance is successful. Referrals to community agencies will be made when the school’s internal school counseling and educational program resources are not sufficient.

With a focus on Mandarin Chinese immersion and the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum framework, PIACS students will use standardized tests and non-mandated tools for assessment. In addition, instructions will be differentiated in classrooms to ensure successful learning outcomes for every student. Students starting from Kindergarten will receive language, cognitive, and health screenings with parental/guardian consent to ensure additional academic supports if needed. The school counseling program and teachers will use disaggregated data to assess how all students are succeeding at multiple times throughout the year and provide additional resources based on the data to ensure equitable educational outcomes for every student. Our goal is that every student reaches her or his full potential and promise on their journey to their academic, career, and college dreams. Specific plans will be developed for students needing additional supports in writing in consultation with parents and guardians and the Director of Education, classroom teacher, and school counselor.

- **eligible for special education and related services;**

If a PIACS student is identified as eligible for related services and special education, PIACS will provide appropriate support services to meet the learning needs of each student as specified in an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). The IEP will be regularly reviewed and updated by the Child Study Team, the Special Education Coordinator, and a School Counselor to adhere to N.J.A.C. 6A:14 requirements. The Child Study Team member(s) will conduct an initial evaluation and as a child is determined eligible for related services and special education, an IEP will be completed with input from parents and guardians, classroom teachers, the school counselor, and the Director of Education. Nonclassified children with learning challenges will have academic success recommendations for intervention designed and recommended collaboratively between the Director of Education, the classroom teacher, and parents/guardians.

- **English language learners; or**

An important element of the Two-Way Immersion approach to dual language education is differentiation of instruction, which is fundamental to addressing the needs of a diverse student body. Cooperative learning is another important element of Two-Way Immersion, which provides an opportunity for children to learn together and from one another and model their strengths and respective languages.

English Language Learner (ELL) support will be offered to students who enter the program with little or no English, as needed. In addition, given that the majority of the curriculum is delivered in Chinese in the lower grades, Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) tutoring will be offered as a resource to students who need additional support in Chinese language acquisition, such as monolingual English students who enter the program after first grade, or who are struggling academically because they have not reached the expected benchmarks for second language acquisition.

ELL students will be identified during the initial language assessment as part of the enrollment process. CLL (Chinese Language Learner) students in need of additional support will be identified by teachers over the course of each year as students' progress is evaluated.

PIACS has unique strategies to successfully support ELL students and help them achieve high academic standards. Two-way immersion classrooms by maximize the strengths of both English and Mandarin Chinese language backgrounds and abilities through differentiated learning strategies and collaborative learning methods. The unique nature of a Mandarin Chinese and English dual language immersion school with IB Units of Inquiry utilizes students' strengths in Mandarin and English in classroom settings to advance literacy in both languages. It develops skill levels in students collaboratively using a variety of dual language immersion strategies in the same classroom for a range of student proficiency levels (Mandarin speakers model Mandarin skills; English speakers model English skills).

Both ELL students and English proficient students will learn the core curriculum in Mandarin Chinese in the early grades primarily shifting to more English over time until a 50% balance of both languages is reached. If the ELL student's primary language is Chinese, then he or she can serve as a language model in the immersion classroom; it is valuable experience to model skills for one's peers, and ELL students are often denied this experience

in monolingual settings. Students whose native language is other than Chinese will be similar to native English speakers in the classroom and will have the chance to become trilingual.

The inclusion of ELL students in PIACS classrooms will benefit all students, as the PIACS program builds dual-language communication in a classroom composed of children of different language backgrounds and abilities, and uses specific strategies differentiated for each child's needs, regardless of language dominance or home language within IB Units of Inquiry. Research demonstrates that ELLs and CLLs flourish in Two-Way Immersion programs following the 90-10 approach. The 90-10 approach is the most effective form of dual language education for ELL students, and it helps close the achievement gap for such students (Thomas & Collier. (1997). *School effectiveness for language minority students*. National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) Resource Collection Series, No. 9.).

A literacy specialist will work with PIACS students for additional literacy and reading support for ELLs and CLLs as they master literacy skill transfer between Mandarin Chinese and English. With various literacy approaches in dual language programs, instruction will be differentiated within IB Units of Inquiry to address each student's specific learning needs using the IB Learner Profile.

- **eligible for services under Section 504 of *The Rehabilitation Act of 1973*.**

Students who are eligible for accommodations will receive appropriate assessment and access to learning services in coordination with the school's special education coordinator, the Child Study Team, and national best practices in ensuring equitable education for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who are not eligible for IDEA/Special Education services will be assessed based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 through the Child Study Team. The team will advise teachers and school counselors about the student's 504 Plan for needed modifications in lesson plans, testing formats and environments, student physical location in each classroom, peer supports such as a buddy, use of computers or keyboards, and any additional adaptations needed to support optimal learning opportunities for the student.

To comply with Section 504, PIACS will provide a free appropriate public education to each qualified student with a disability in the region's jurisdiction regardless of the type or severity of the disability. Students' individual needs will be met with regular or special education and related services and aids designed specifically for each student. PIACS will comply with 34 C.F.R. 104.35(b), which requires school districts (i.e., our region), to individually evaluate a student before classifying the student as having a disability or before providing special education services to the student.

- b. Describe the process to ensure that all students with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education as required by *N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1. et. seq.***

All students will be assessed for their learning and emotional needs when recommended by teachers, school counselors, administrators, or parents and guardians. Students will be

recommended for the Child Study team to ensure appropriate learning environments for the full range of abilities and disabilities including students who are identified as gifted and talented. PIACS will employ evidence-based best practices in assisting students with learning and/or physical disabilities succeed in the Chinese-English immersion program. PIACS will comply with all federal Child Find Requirements (34 CFR & 300.125) and all Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) provisions that require PIACS to have and use a process for identifying, locating, and evaluating students with disabilities.

PIACS will adopt policies, procedures, and implement programs as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1 *Et. Seq.* that will be approved by the Department of Education through the appropriate county superintendent's office. PIACS will monitor implementation through the Director of Education and the Coordinator of Special Education to ensure a free, appropriate, public education is given to all students attending PIACS including students with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from PIACS. The school will ensure all sections of N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.2 are met including appropriate accommodations made so that students with disabilities are included in the Statewide Assessment Program and other school-wide assessment programs. PIACS will provide written certification of compliance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.2 requirements and annually detail how it will use funds distributed by the state of New Jersey under Part B of the IDEA (or other program) for the following school year.

PIACS will provide an annual report prepared by the Coordinator of Special Education and the Director of Education including:

- The number of students with disabilities according to their federal disability category, age, ethnicity, race, and placement.
  - PIACS staff providing services including contracted personnel who identify, evaluate, determine eligibility, develop IEPs, provide related services, and/or provide instruction to students with disabilities, and the full-time equivalents of their assignments and relevant information on current and anticipated staff vacancies and/or shortages.
  - Additional reports required by the IDEA (20U.S.C.1400 *et. Seq.*), including, but not limited to, how many students with disabilities exit education, are subject to suspensions and expulsions, are removed to interim alternative educational settings, and participate in statewide assessments.
- c. Describe the process that the school will ensure equal and bias-free access for all students to all school facilities, courses, programs, activities and services, regardless of race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, religion, English proficiency, socioeconomic status or disability.**

From the mission statement to hiring of staff to the welcoming of a classroom curriculum framework that includes New Jersey core curriculum learning standards and IB curriculum framework, all students and families will be celebrated and welcomed. PIACS will make a concerted effort to employ all necessary strategies to ensure that every student receives an equitable and bias-free education including access to all PIACS facilities, courses, programs, activities, and services in compliance with all state and federal laws.

All instructions will be provided in ways that affirm diverse abilities/disabilities, ages, appearances, ethnic/racial identities, family types, genders, gender identity/expression, language backgrounds, nationalities and citizenship statuses, sexual orientations, socioeconomic identities, and spiritual/religious/meaning-making systems. PIACS will notify students, families, staff, and the general public that all educational programs are available without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or disability. PIACS will also provide a notice of nondiscrimination in all newsletters, annual reports, administrative reports, program information, handbooks, application forms, and promotional materials. The facility we have identified will meet ADA accessibility standards. In addition, a lottery system will ensure that there is no preference given to any student or group of students and that enrollment is fair and equitable.

**d. Outline the school's policies and procedures to provide students with home instruction due to temporary illness or injury.**

Students who miss school due to temporary illness or injury will be given appropriate lessons and activities to complete outside of school on a case by case basis from the students' teachers both in electronic and paper formats. Regular assessments will be conducted and email or phone calls will be used between the student's parents/guardians and teachers to ensure students are progressing at a similar pace to those in the school classroom. PIACS will develop and implement home instruction policies and procedures for students with temporary illness or injury as outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:16, which address the specific requirements. The Director of Education will monitor coordination between the home instructor and the regular classroom teacher in determining the student's educational program. A student receiving home instruction is not considered absent as specified in N.J.A.C. 6A: 16.

To request home instruction due to temporary illness or injury, parents or guardians will submit a written determination letter from a physician documenting need for confinement to the Director of Education. Instructional services will begin no later than seven calendar days after verification by the school's contracted physician. The teacher providing instruction will be appropriately certified for the subject or level in which instruction is given or as a teacher of special education for students with physical disabilities. Instruction will be provided no less than five hours per week.

A record of the student's home instruction will be maintained by the Director of Education. A certified teacher will accomplish the five hours of instruction per week in less than three visits on three separate days per week. Instruction will be provided at the student's place of confinement. If the student is confined to a hospital, convalescent home, or other medical institution, the following criteria will apply: instruction will be provided by the board of trustees, educational commission, state-operated facility, joint commission, or approved clinic or agency at the students' place of confinement; instruction will be provided through one-on-one or small group instruction. Students will receive a program that meets board of trustees requirements for promotion.