

Spotlight Strategy: Provide Extra Help to Strengthen Academic and/or Technical Skill Achievement

Middle Bucks Institute of Technology

Middle Bucks has developed a detailed process to provide special needs students with the support necessary to succeed. Nearly one-half of the technical center's 800 students is identified as special needs and is directly served by a special education support staff comprised of three special education instructors and twelve instructional assistants.

The faculty follows several steps in order to prepare and deliver a comprehensive education to those special needs students who choose to attend Middle Bucks. Each year between April and June, the special education staff visits the sending schools to meet all incoming students with special education needs. During these meetings, the staff serves on the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team to assist with determining appropriate placement and supports. The special education staff then meets with Middle Bucks faculty to discuss and ensure all involved instructors understand the accommodations that are to be provided to the special needs students.

To make certain the IEP is fully implemented and the student is properly monitored, a special education instructor is assigned to each student to serve as an advocate, monitor progress, attend the IEP meetings and communicate with the parent. Each of these services provided to the student is tracked in PowerSchool, a student information system, to provide documentation that the accommodations identified in the IEP are being met.

In order to help identify career strengths and interests, each special needs student completes a CareerScope assessment as part of the application process. This assessment, available from ninth graders to adults, takes an interest inventory, assesses seven different skills and then creates a profile of interests and skill sets. Upon completion of the CareerScope assessment, a counselor meets with the student to review the results of the assessment and the career pathways and training associated with each career. If necessary, additional assessments such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Crawford Small Parts Dexterity Test and the Bennett Hand Tool Dexterity Test are administered.

While much of the monitoring and hands-on support is done at the faculty level, the administration formed the Child Study Team to monitor and provide support to all students at the career and technical center. This team, which consists of two assistant principals, three special education instructors, advancement coordinators, a school nurse and guidance counselor, meets at least once a month to discuss struggling students and how best to address the issues at hand. The team uses PowerSchool Student Accounting System to develop reports indicating students with poor attendance, failing grades, health concerns and frequent discipline incidents to identify struggling students.

Also in December 2009, the administration held an in-service professional development session to educate sending school counselors and special education supervisors about program requirements and new initiatives at Middle Bucks prior to recruitment for the upcoming school year.

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Middle Bucks Institute of Technology is located in Jamison, Pennsylvania. As a part-time career and technical center, it enrolls approximately 840 students in grades 10 through 12 and provides 21 career and technical education programs. (Ninth graders may apply with special permission.) Middle Bucks serves three school districts.