



## **Inclusion/Special Education Needs Policy 2014-2015**

### **Our Goal and Philosophy**

The International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IB MYP) at The School for International Studies is a child-centered program that provides meaningful and equitable access to MYP and Common Core curricula for all students. We understand that children develop at different rates and have a diverse range of learning abilities and needs. Through differentiating instruction, adaptations, and modifications, teachers ensure that all students have access to and are engaged in learning. We plan collaboratively across grades and departments in order to respond positively to each student's unique learning profile.

### **Inclusion**

At The School for International Studies, we believe that valuing diversity and difference is essential to maintaining a culture of international mindedness. Every effort is made to provide the least restrictive environment that appropriately matches the needs of each student. Therefore, inclusion can be implemented differently for each student, depending on many factors such as, but not limited to:

- the student's skill level
- the student's previous learning experiences
- the unit of study

We provide support to meet the Special Educational Needs (SEN) of our students through some of the following services:

- Flexible Programming
- Access to Common Core curricula for all students
- Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classrooms
- Special Class Services
- Support in the General Education classroom from Special Education teachers
- Paraprofessionals available for one-to-one with students
- Counseling
- Speech and Language Pathologist, small group and in-class support
- English Language Learner (ELL) support through "push in" and small class instruction
- Work space for students to use additional time for class activities, including exams

## **Special Educational Needs Students**

Our Special Educational Needs (SEN) population includes students who need differentiation, adaptations, or modifications to curriculum in order to meet their learning needs and facilitate continued academic growth. These students may include, but are not limited to:

- Special Education students who have an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) in place. Examples of these special needs include:
  - Specific learning disabilities
  - Language and communication disorders
  - Emotional and behavioral difficulties
  - Physical difficulties affecting mobility
  - Sensory impairments
  - Mental health conditions (such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, eating disorders and anxiety)
- English Learners who have a barrier in the language of instruction
- Students who are in need of counseling support
- Students with medical or health issues which require a 504
- Students of poverty

## **Special Education and Related Services Defined**

- Flexible programming means that a student may receive any combination of special education services and programs. The services and programs on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) do not have to be the same for the entire day.
- Counseling is recommended for students who have social-emotional difficulties that significantly interfere with learning.
- Paraprofessional services support students for all or a portion of the school day to address their individual needs and to allow them to benefit from instruction and related services.
- Speech/Language therapy helps to improve a student's listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in academic and social situations throughout the school environment.
- Integrated Co-Teaching classrooms include students with disabilities and their typically developing peers, who are educated together with two teachers: a general education teacher and a special education teacher. The teachers collaborate to adapt and modify instruction for children and make sure the entire class has access to the general education curriculum.
- Special class services are services provided for children with disabilities in a self-contained classroom for any part of the school day. They serve children whose needs cannot be met within the general education classroom. These services may be provided on a full-time or part-time basis.

## **Differentiation**

“Differentiation can help learners access the content at an appropriate level through a variety of resources” (Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate program 5). Differentiation is a system of strategies that appropriately structure the curriculum so that each learner can reach his or her true potential. Differentiation can take many forms and is closely tied with the Four Principles of Good Practice outlined by IB. Teachers differentiate through various means including, but not limited to:

Content- Modifying resources and learning goals or providing opportunities for students to select what they want to learn

Process- Providing variety of methods in how students will learn.

Product- Capitalizing on students’ learning preferences and strengths by permitting them choice when demonstrating learning

### **Adaptation and Modification**

Adaptations and modifications are changes that allow students to participate in regular classrooms as independently as possible to the best of their abilities. Things to consider when modifying or adapting a student’s program include levels of skill development, equipment and materials, instructional practices and curriculum. Student and parent goals are considered when adapting or modifying in the classroom.

### **Inquiry and Collaboration**

At The School for International Studies, we believe in adult development and teacher inquiry. We believe that strong teachers and great schools embed collaborative practices and teacher learning into the culture of their communities. Our students learn when we learn beside them. We believe that in order to support our students and provide a profoundly engaging and rigorous educational experience, teacher teams must meet regularly, analyze student work and data, as well as plan lessons collectively within departments and across subjects. This inquiry work allows teachers to engage in intellectually rich conversations about individual students, how they learn best and particular instructional moves and practices that will increase student growth and conceptual understanding. As we continue to develop as an International Baccalaureate School, it is imperative that we plan for the holistic child so that our students can be inquisitive, reflective learners and so that their unique abilities are nurtured in creative and meaningful ways.

At The School for International Studies, we believe students learn best when:

- their prior knowledge is considered to be important
- learning is in context
- context is relevant
- they can learn collaboratively
- the learning environment is proactive
- they get appropriate, formative feedback that supports their learning
- diverse learning styles are understood and accommodated
- they feel secure and their ideas are valued and respected
- values and expectations are explicit
- there is a culture of curiosity at the school

- they understand how learning is assessed, and how to provide evidence of their learning
- they become aware of and understand how they learn
- structured inquiry, critical thinking, learning through experience and conceptual development are central to teaching in the school
- learning is engaging, challenging, rigorous, relevant and significant
- they are encouraged in everything they do in school to become autonomous, lifelong learners

### **Individualized Education Programs and Accountability**

The role of the Special Education teacher at The School for International Studies is vital. They possess a level of expertise, sensitivity and unique skills to inform this work and its implementation. They provide teaching strategies and feedback throughout the professional learning community to look at what students know, what they need to know and how we can plan to meet student needs and support them along a continuum of progress. We also know that students learn in a variety of ways and strong practices in differentiating instruction can meet the needs of all learners when we provide effective accommodations and a variety of entry points that push students to think critically, conceptually and globally.

As a Special Education Teacher:

- Every school year, they read each of the students' Individualized Education Programs (IEP). They gather information regarding learning needs, accommodations and goals previously set, either on **SEIS** or in the School Based Support Team Office (where paper copies of IEPs are available). This information is shared with ICT partners and general education grade team members.
- Students' IEPs are reviewed and revised each year during their **Annual Conference** by the Sub-Committee on Special Education which includes a counselor, speech provider, general education teachers, and others. The Sub-Committee will update the IEP to ensure that we are serving each student with the supports and services he/she needs to grow and thrive academically, socially and emotionally. The parent is included in the process and invited to meet the team to review the IEP each year.
- Every three years, the School Psychologist will conduct a **3-year Review** (Triennial) and will include the Special Education teaches in the process during classroom observations and data collection. A thorough evaluation and assessment planning will take place.

### **Special Education Resource Center**

The Special Education Resource Center allows each Special Education teacher the space to collaboratively plan, meet, and write IEPs.

## **Student Special Education Process**

According to the New York City Department of Education, there are five steps in the Special Education process.

1. Initial referral or “request for referral”- A parent, teacher, or other educator requests an evaluation. After the parent consents to the evaluation, the child is evaluated and an IEP meeting is scheduled (generally within 60 days of the referral.)
2. Evaluation- Generally, if the child does not already have an IEP, a social history and an educational and psychological evaluation are done. Other types of evaluations may also be requested.
3. IEP team meeting- There are several legal variations on who is present and what must be discussed, but generally, the parent(s), the student, the teacher(s), and others who know the student’s educational profile review evaluations and records to determine:
  - Whether the student fits one of the eligible categories of disability and, if so,
  - What and how he/she should learn in the next twelve months. Specific school placements should also be discussed.
4. Recommendation/Determination- The Department of Education places the child in school according to the same criteria that govern all other city schoolchildren, making every effort to match the child’s individual needs with services known to be available in the school
5. Review- Annually—or whenever a change in behavior, achievement, or school circumstances makes it necessary—the IEP team meeting is repeated, with the goal of determining the best possible match between the student’s needs and the available services.

## **Note on Policy Review Process**

This Inclusion Policy—like our Language Policy, Assessment Policy, and Academic Honesty Policy—was created through a careful review process, and will undergo annual revision. It is a working document, meaning that we keep it up to date with the needs of the student population and in line with national and local legislation. Theresa Dwulit, our Special Education Department Facilitator, drafted this policy in November 2014 in accordance with the IB policy guidelines (as presented in *MYP: From principles into practice* September 2014-January 2015). The draft underwent review and revision by International Studies’ MYP Coordinator, teachers, students, and other stakeholders. The final draft was approved, with any final edits, by the school administration and then made available to the entire school community. Annually, it will be evaluated for its effectiveness and to ensure that it is accurate and up-to-date.