

SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

(See BC Special Education Policy Manual)

Policy

Every learner is unique. The Montessori philosophy and methodology supports this premise. While our classroom strategies embrace students learning at his or her own pace, the Board also recognized that certain adaptations and/or modifications sometimes must be put in place for specific learners. At the same time the individual child's needs must not be so great that the Montessori philosophy is unable to be practiced to its full potential within the classroom and/or that the needs of other children are undermined.

Definitions

STUDENT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A "student with special needs" means a student who has a disability of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural nature, has a learning disability or has exceptional gifts or talents". Ministerial Order 150/89 Special Needs Students Order

SCHOOL BASED RESOURCE TEAM (SBRT)

The school-based resources team is comprised of the principal, a learning assistance teacher, a classroom teacher and sometimes a counselor. They have a formal role to play as a problem-solving unit in assisting classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to coordinate support resources for students with special needs within the school.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)

An IEP is a documented plan developed for a student with special needs that describes individualized goals, adaptations, modifications, the services to be provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement.

Administrative Procedures

1. Admission procedures

- 1.1 Admission of a new student with special needs ideally begins with a meeting with the Principal and parents who are expected to provide records and assessments where applicable. The School Based Resource Team (SBRT) will then go over the records to access the type and level of service, the equipment and the facilities required and the availability of community support services, which would be necessary to support the student's learning at Maria Montessori Academy.
- 1.2 The SBRT will then discuss the school's ability to meet the student's needs within the context of the classroom and the school.
- 1.3 Acceptance will be based on the availability of all the necessary support services and the school's confidence that the student can be served adequately to provide an appropriate education program without causing undue financial hardship. As with regular students wishing to enter Maria Montessori Academy, the minimum 2 full day visit requirement applies and in some circumstances, may be extended to more than the 2 visits, if it is necessary to help in accessing the school's ability to meet the student's needs.
- 1.4 It must be noted that the admission process for students with special needs may follow different timelines than regular admissions. Existing students within the school will be given first priority and there may be testing and/or assessments in

progress and until these are finished the school's ability to provide resources of staffing, financial, space and ratios.

- 1.5 There is no specific number that the school will be able to adhere to when admitting students with special needs, as each situation and each child is unique. The school will at all times try to be fair while maintaining the integrity of the school's philosophy and fairness to the other children in each classroom.

2. IEP Procedures

2.1 The development of an IEP serves a number of purposes:

- formalizes planning decisions and processes, linking assessment with programming.
- provides teachers, parents, and students with a record of the educational program for an individual student with special needs, and serves as the basis for reporting the student's progress.
- serves as a tool for tracking individual student learning in terms of agreed upon goals and objectives.
- documents the relationships between any support services being provided and the student's educational program.
- provides parents and students with a mechanism for input into the individualized planning process.

2.2 What must an IEP contain?

- the goals or outcomes set for that student for that school year where they are different from the learning outcomes set out in an applicable educational program guide; or
- a list of the support services required to achieve goals established for the student; or
- a list of the adaptations to educational materials, instructional strategies or assessment methods.
- the present levels of educational performance of the student;
- the names of all personnel who will be providing the educational program and the support services for the student during the school year
- the period of time and process for review of the IEP;
- evidence of evaluation or review, which could include revisions made to the plan and the tracking of achievement in relation to goals; and
- plans for the next transition point in the student's education (including transitions beyond school completion) and linkages to Graduation Transition during Grades 10-12.

2.3 Who develops the IEP?

2.3a The principal of the school is responsible for the implementation of educational programs (School Act Regulation 5(7)(a)) but collaboration occurs between school personnel, community agencies, and parents.

2.3b Parents (and the student if possible) must be given the opportunity to be consulted in the planning process, and should receive a copy of the IEP.

2.3c The IEP should document instances where services are offered but the parent or the student refuses them.

2.4 Who must have an IEP?

All students with special needs must have an IEP. An exception can be made if:

- the student with special needs requires no adaptation or only minor adaptations to educational materials, or instructional or assessment methods;
- the expected learning outcomes established by the applicable educational program guide have not been modified for the student with special needs; and
- the student with special needs requires in a school year, 25 hours or less remedial instruction, by a person other than the classroom teacher in order for the student to meet the expected learning outcomes.

3. Planning and Co-coordinating Community Services

Some students will require services and supports provided by agencies in the community. It is essential that school and community services be coordinated to avoid duplication, and to ensure consensus regarding goals, consistency in interventions and an integrated approach to service delivery. The school-based team should be responsible for co-operating with these community services, and plays a key role in keeping school staff informed of services available in the community.

4. Funding for Special Education Students

Not all students identified as special education students receive separate funding. The Independent Schools Branch of Special Education administers supplemental funding for Special Education Programs. The criteria for funding are very specific for each funded category. There is an auditing process in place that checks that proper procedures, documentation and implementation are in order. Therefore it is important that the school have a copy of **all** testing and/or assessment results pertaining to the child and that they be kept current. Failure to do so could result in a loss of funding.

Special Education Funding is allocated to the following:

Physically dependent
Deaf/ Blind
Intellectual Disabilities
Physical Disabilities or Chronic Health Impairments
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
Intensive Behaviour
Serious Mental Illness

NON-FUNDED CATEGORIES

Learning disabilities
Gifted
Visual Impairments
Hard of Hearing

5. KINDERGARTEN SCREENING

In the past few years, literacy screening of Kindergarten students has been introduced, so that early intervention can be implemented, if results indicate a need to do so.

6. Appeals to Decisions

If parents/guardians are not satisfied with a decision that affects the education, health or safety of their child, they can appeal these decisions by first bringing the matter to the Principal. Further appeals can be made in writing to the MMA Board of Directors.

Further and more detailed information relating to Special Education can be found in the BC Ministry of Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines:

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/ppandg.htm> Please note that there are some differences between how Public Schools and Independent schools are required to meet the Ministry of Education's Special Education reporting and funding criteria.