

Special Needs Education Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

Westmont believes that all students have an essential role to play in the school community. An inclusive model of education has been set up whereby all students are educated with their same-aged peers in regular classrooms as much as possible. The Learning Assistance, Special Education and Enrichment opportunities have been established to assist teachers in providing appropriate inclusive education for students with differing needs.

The **Special Education Program** serves those students eligible for a grant for students with special needs and mental and physical health needs under the provincial independent schools' program. These students have specific needs such as hearing loss, developmental delay, serious illness, cerebral palsy, behavioral needs, and medically diagnosed social and emotional needs.

The **Learning Assistance Program** provides direct instruction, bypass strategies, and tools for students with learning needs who do not qualify for special education funding.

Enrichment opportunities are inherent in each classroom across curricular areas and meet the individual needs of students who have the potential to excel in academics.

The **Counselling Program** is designed to meet the social, emotional, and communication needs of Middle School and High School students who require assistance from a counsellor, generally in an individual setting. The counsellor may also facilitate activity or friendship skills groups.

2.0 Policy Rationale

2.1 Special education programs and services enable students with diverse academic, and mental and physical health needs to have equitable access to learning and opportunities to pursue and achieve the goals of their educational programs.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 "Inclusion Support Coordinator" (IST) is an integral part of the school's instructional leadership team, responsible for overseeing programs that provide educational assistance to students with pending and accepted designation and is a member of the School Based Team (SBT).

3.2 "Learning Assistance Teacher" is a direct-service teacher has 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 diverse learning profiles, with or without designations.

3.3 "Inclusion" describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with integration and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others.

3.4 "Student with diverse needs" means a student whose intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural development is impeding their ability to learn or to connect with their peers or teachers, has a diagnosed learning disability, and/or has exceptional gifts or talents requiring individualized curriculum or instruction."

3.5 "IEP" or Individual Education Plan is a written plan developed for a student with special needs that describes individualized goals, adaptations and/or modifications, services to be provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement.

3.6 "School-based Team (SBT)" is comprised of the core members: Head of School or their delegate, the counsellor and the ISC, and the rotating members relevant to the cases being reviewed. The core team reviews all student referral forms and may attend school-based team meetings. Other attendees may include teachers, supervisors and other professionals as required.

4.0 School Admission

Admission for students with diverse needs to Westmont is subject to all established policies and procedures. Parents are required to disclose all assessment and services in place at the time of application and/or registration. In addition, the following procedures will be applied to students requiring special education, learning assistance, or enrichment:

4.1 When an application for admission to the school is received indicating a need for any of the above programs, it is passed to the ISC, who will do an initial screening through observation and/or informal assessment and then forward the information to the Head of School or the Admissions Coordinator.

4.2 During the intake process, the following will be discussed by the parents and the Head of School or their delegate:

- a. the current service in place.
- b. the services needed
- c. when these services will be in place.
- d. who will be responsible for implementing the required services.

4.3 During the intake process, parents will be made aware as early as possible if the school is unable to supply the required services.

4.4 The Head of School or Admissions Coordinator will direct the admission process and be the main contact with parents. The parents must disclose all relevant information regarding the child's needs, including any professional diagnosis received or in progress, with or without ongoing services.

4.5 If parents are not willing to disclose all relevant information, the admissions process will cease.

5.0 Referral of Enrolled Students for Funding from the Ministry of Education

5.1 During the school year, as student development and needs are observed, teachers will discuss concerns with the parents and, if warranted, refer the child to the School Based Team for a strategies and services review. If the team, including the classroom teachers, determines an assessment is required, this will be communicated to the parents by a member of the School Based Team. The ISC will become the case manager, coordinating school-based services. If a designation is indicated according to Ministry of Education criteria, the ISC will review the profile, update the red file, and submit the information to administration for the next 1701 cycle. Westmont staff members will collaborate on establishing and monitoring the initial Individual Education Plan and putting support in place.

6.0 Individual Education Plans

6.1 Each student receiving a designation from the Ministry of Education must have a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) on file. This IEP documents the educational plan for the student to develop the skills and knowledge most relevant to their development. It outlines the program modifications and/or adaptations for the student, and the services that are to be provided. The IEPs for designated students are written and implemented by the ISC with the collaboration of the teachers and aide, if assigned. Parents will be offered an opportunity to provide input to further inform the IEP.

6.2 Once the IEP is written it is then shared with the school-based team and parents at an IEP meeting where participants are invited to add any further input. Students in upper grades may also be invited to take an active part in the IEP planning and meetings. The individual education plan will be regularly reviewed a minimum of two times per year.

7.0 Instruction

7.1 Westmont students are encouraged to be as independent as possible. Where deemed appropriate by the School Based Team, they will receive one-on-one instruction in the Learning Assistance room or in or near the classroom. Parents will be informed of the alternative delivery and offered an opportunity to meet with the Learning Assistance Teacher.

8.0 Special Education Program

8.1 Westmont's Inclusion Support Program is designed as an inclusive program that integrates students with diverse needs into their classes whenever possible, but not exclusively. Decisions on the amount of integration are based on the needs of the child.

8.2 The Inclusion Support Program provides for the needs of students who qualify for funding under the Ministry of Education Independent Schools Branch Program.

8.3 Classroom teachers are responsible for the students' educational program. They communicate regularly with aides and the Learning Assistance Teacher to determine schedules and content of lessons. Classroom teachers and the Learning Assistance Teacher report to parents on the student's progress.

8.4 Aides provide the personal care and education for funded special education students and promote their inclusion with peers. As deemed appropriate by the SBT, they deliver instruction on the academic curriculum to support the lessons attended with the group. They work under the supervision of the classroom teacher and the ISC.

8.5 The ISC is responsible for designing and guiding the implementation of the academic interventions and alternative instruction. The ISC, classroom teachers, teaching assistants and aides, parents and other professionals work together as a team.

8.6 A school counsellor is available to consult on the social-emotional needs of students with the team.

8.7 The ISC carries out the following activities on the following schedule:

a. Start-up

- i. Meet with new assistants and teachers to discuss each student with diverse needs.
- ii. coordinate the involvement of therapists and consultants.
- iii. provide support for classroom teachers as the students with special needs settle into their new class.
- iv. observe students with possible or documented designations in class.
- v. hold IEP meetings to establish or update IEPs.
- vi. administer relevant tests.
- vii. begin direct instruction for students; and
- viii. establish a list of substitute assistants.

b. Ongoing

- i. Assess and evaluate each student's program.
- ii. problem-solve with school-based team as needed.
- iii. anticipate, review, and process new designations.
- iv. continue direct instruction.
- v. evaluate program.
- vi. update IEPs.
- vii. act as a resource for staff members.
- viii. administer informal and formal assessments.
- ix. compile information in preparation for grant application.
- x. identify emerging best practice and emerging programs, technologies, and interventions for students with exceptionalities.

c. Year End

- i. Hold team meetings for year-end reporting.
- ii. work on IEPs for the following school year.
- iii. review files for special education grants for the following school year.
- iv. determine anticipated therapy contract hours for the following school year.
- v. participate in determining each student's placement and assistant placement for the coming year.

9.0 Learning Assistance Program

9.1 The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) at Westmont is designed as an inclusive program. Students with exceptional learning needs are included in the regular classroom. Decisions about levels of integration are based on the real needs of the children.

9.2 This is a flexible program that provides remedial and direct, individual instruction for students with learning disabilities or who are requiring a boost to their skills. The LAP utilizes technology and alternative deliveries to help students develop bypass strategies. The LAP also supports students in developing executive functioning and metacognitive strategies.

9.3 Classroom teachers are responsible for the Students' programs. They meet with the Learning Assistance Teacher and aides to determine schedules and delivery of service. They communicate frequently, and they report to parents.

9.4 The Learning Assistance Teacher is responsible for implementing the remedial program. The Learning Assistance Teacher, classroom teachers, and teaching assistants work together as a team.

9.5 A school counsellor is available to consult on the social-emotional needs of students with the team.

9.6 The Head of School or their delegate are responsible for supporting the program and maintaining the vision for inclusion in the school. They process new admissions, sign contracts with outside services, and provide the same services as for all new students (e.g. budgeting, staffing, staff supervision, facilities, safety, parent concerns, appropriate curriculum, etc.).

9.7 Where useful, an IEP will document services provided in the Learning Assistance Program.

9.8 Classroom teachers write the report cards to parents. The Learning Assistance Teacher also writes a section in the report for students they had seen regularly.

9.9 Program implementation generally occurs during the school year as follows:

a. Start-up

- i. Orient new assistants and new teachers.
- ii. identify Students needing Learning Assistance using advice from teachers and/or testing.
- iii. write student plans for children new to the program.
- iv. determine the most suitable programs and technologies.
- v. prepare Learning Assistance schedules.
- vi. meet with families new to the school.

b. Ongoing

- i. Help to identify learning difficulties.
- ii. develop strategies to meet the needs of individual students.
- iii. provide direct instruction for students.

- iv. meet regularly with classroom teachers and teaching assistants to discuss students' progress.
- v. maintain a collaborative relationship with classroom teachers, teachers of special subjects, school administrators and parents.
- vi. order and maintain learning assistance resources.
- vii. act as a resource for staff members.
- viii. administer informal and formal assessments.
- ix. keep adequate records of students' progress; and
- x. compile information in preparation for grant applications.

c. Year End

- i. Evaluate the program.
- ii. participate in planning for returning students' placements and programs for the upcoming year.
- iii. organize student files for the next school year.

10.0 Enrichment Program

10.1 Students designated as gifted or requiring enrichment curriculum are accommodated on an individual basis, according to their needs, and is reflective of the Montessori pedagogy. They may receive an opportunity, with the Learning Assistance teacher, to expand their study of a particular unit. Most often they will be helped to design a framework for independent study in an area of interest. In addition, where needed, there will be an Individual Education Plan formulated using the same guidelines and procedures as for those in the Learning Assistance program.

Policy Cross Reference:

Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines- BC Ministry of Education, April 2016