ADA MERRITT K-8 CENTER
INCLUSION POLICY

School inclusion philosophy

Ada Merritt K-8 Center provides a challenging and nurturing academic environment for a diverse student population. As described in the school's Admission Policy, students can enter the program by participating in a random selection of eligible applicants. As a result, our student population reflects the region's diversity. We appreciate the differing instructional needs of our students and incorporate strategies to address students' special needs within our International Baccalaureate Programme. Those with special needs receive additional or differentiated instruction. To ensure that each learner receives the appropriate support needed to benefit fully from all the provided learning opportunities, teachers differentiate instruction and provide a variety of activities and resources that accommodate learners at all levels of skill and knowledge. Assessment is diverse and relevant, focusing on real-world tasks and encouraging self-reflection and recognition of personal growth.

Ada Merritt K-8 Center offers an inclusive education for students with special needs, with a consultative model for special education services in which the special education teacher consults and collaborates with the general education teacher to monitor the implementation of special education services.

We are committed to working with parents, educational specialists, teachers, and student services staff to ensure that all students reach their maximum potential, regardless of exceptionality or medical condition. Examples of special educational needs include: specific learning disabilities, hearing and/or language impairment, behavior/emotional disorders, attention disorders, medical conditions such as diabetes, severe allergies, and heart problems, mental health conditions, autism.

School Inclusion Structure and Processes

Parents or school personnel may request an evaluation that may lead to a child being identified as a student with special needs for services in school.

The evaluation procedures include ongoing assessments of the child's response to instruction and interventions, interviews, observations, the analysis of this information, and sometimes individual tests administered by a school psychologist or a speech/language pathologist. Based on collected information and data analysis, the team may decide that a child is eligible for Exceptional Student Education (ESE). If a child is not eligible for ESE services, the team will continue to work with him/her to identify and implement effective instruction and intervention. The team's problem-solving process continues in an ongoing effort to improve and maintain an effective education for every child.

Legal Requirements and Definitions

Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

If a child is eligible for ESE services, an individual educational plan (IEP) is developed to address the child's specific needs. Depending on the IEP, special educational services may include individual or small group instruction, teaching modifications, and/or physical, occupational and speech therapy. The parent or guardian must give consent for services before the IEP can be implemented.

The school communicates with parents on a quarterly basis regarding the child's progress on each of the goals that were developed at the last IEP meeting. The quarterly status report on goals reflects one of the following: mastery of the goal, adequate progress made, some progress made, or insufficient progress made.

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Section 504 Procedures for Students with Disabilities

Students who have been diagnosed with one or more conditions affecting major life activities such as caring for oneself, seeing, breathing, walking, hearing, speaking, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and performing manual tasks, may qualify for a Section 504 Plan for Students with Disabilities.

The procedures for initiating special educationalservices are as follows:

- Student is referred to the School Support Team (SST), or, in the case of students with obvious physical or health needs that require accommodations, directly to the 504 team.
- If the SST determines it is appropriate to refer for 504 services, a Section 504 team consisting of a person who knows of the documented disability, a person who knows the student, and a person who knows of accommodations, convene to write the initial Section 504 plan. Parents and students are encouraged to attend the meeting and provide input that would help the team in making decisions.

Section 504 teams convene for annual or interim meetings to review and, if necessary, revise, the plan. Section 504 requires that reevaluations occur every three years, before any significant change in placement, or at the request of parents or school personnel. Section 504 evaluations include reviewing information from a variety of sources, such as teacher observations, standardized test scores, report cards, and information from parents and medical providers, to gauge the effectiveness of the plan in meeting the student's educational needs.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that protects the rights of students with disabilities and provides additional support and assistance in special education services. These rights, or procedural safeguards, are intended to ensure that parents can be a partner in educational decisions.

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention is a process where the school uses student assessment data to make sure that all students are making satisfactory academic and behavioral progress. Multiple tiers (or levels of intensity) of both academic and behavioral supports are made available to groups or individual students based on data that the school collects on a regular basis. Students who need the most intensive level of support may be referred for possible eligibility determination for special education.

PYP: In addition to the 90-minutes Reading Language Arts class, students with reading difficulties participate in a daily 30-minute reading intervention that specifically addresses the students' need in the following components: phonological awareness, phonics, high frequency words, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students who need the most intensive level of support may be referred for possible eligibility determination for special education.

MYP: students who score below 3 on the state's standardized tests in reading and in mathematics are required to take an intensive course in reading or mathematics.

ESOL level 1-4: PYP students participate in small group instruction with the ESOL resource teacher, and MYP students receive instruction from their ESOL certified language arts teacher.

Rights and Responsibilities

Inclusion is a responsibility shared by all members of the school community. Teachers collaborate among themselves and with parents to identify and support students with special needs. The school

counselor and assistant principal collaborate to meet and document all district requirements. School staff collaborate with parents to monitor the effectiveness of the support provided to students. MYP Parents have the right to waive the required intensive mathematics or reading class requirement if their child has not previously scored below a 3 on the state standardized test.

What are some expectations of our program?

- Work collaboratively with faculty and families in order to ensure student success.
- Respect and acknowledge students' strengths and progress towards their learning goals.

What are current learning needs at the school?

Most of our special needs students fall in 2 categories:

- Gifted students: to meet the district mandated gifted objectives by participating in a Gifted Reading Language Arts Class in the PYP, and in an Advanced Academics Design class in the MYP, which is a project-based class
- Students with an IEP or 504 plan receive differentiated support based on their identified needs and specific plan.

What are some strategies?

- Differentiating instructional contents, processes and products based on students' learning profile, readiness, and interest
- Engaging students in small group intervention
- Providing positive reinforcement, praise, and re-direction
- Providing support and clarity on classroom expectations and behavioral objectives
- Dividing long-term assignments into small increments
- Using manipulatives (games, computer-based interventions) during group interventions
- Encouraging peer mentoring and providing tutoring sessions and web-based programs for students who need support and reinforcement in reading and mathematics
- Providing small group setting and/or additional time for testing.

Additional School Student Services:

In addition to the two counselors on staff at Ada Merritt K-8 Center, District staff members also provide services on a part time/as needed basis: a school Nurse, an ESE consultative specialist, a social worker, a speech therapist, a psychologist, and a mental health coordinator.

Inclusion Policy Review

To ensure that the inclusion policy is a working document and a resource for all members of the school community, it is revised regularly by a steering committee. Members of the steering committee include representation from the leadership team, counselors, and support teachers. Revisions aim to reflect changes in the needs of the local community, and changes in district or IB requirements. The inclusion policy is reviewed annually by the faculty, and by parents and students who provide feedback and suggestions. All school policies are shared with the community on the school website at http://adamerrittk-8center.org and in the Parent and Student Handbook.

Last review date: 8/30/22.