

POLICY NAME: Policy on Special Educational Needs
POLICY NUMBER: 26.0
DATE OF APPROVAL: 7 November 2016

POLICY CROSS-REFERENCED:

- Policy on Admissions
- Policy on Assessment

REFERENCES

- Learning Diversity in the International Baccalaureate Programmes: Special Educational Needs Within The International Baccalaureate Programs, 2010.
 - Meeting Student Learning Diversity in the Classroom, 2013
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POLICY STATEMENT

The Beacon Academy values and strives to include and engage diverse learners in all its academic endeavors. Aligned with the assertion of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) that “schools should be organized in such a way that student diversity go all kinds be included as a resource, seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriched learning,” it values diversity and learning from multiple perspectives in the context of respect and compassion.”¹

Inclusion may be defined as an on-going process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all its students by identifying and removing barriers to success. It is not about marginalizing students because of their differences but about responding positively to each individual’s unique needs. As The Beacon Academy strives to be a school that differentiates learning for all its students, the school administration and faculty endeavor to develop and provide a range of learning approaches, activities and resources that march the goals, methods, skills and knowledge of its individual learners.

The Beacon Academy’s commitment to provide high quality education to a broad range of students therefore includes meeting the educational requirements of students identified with special educational needs, where possible within the school’s human, physical and technological resources.

POLICY GUIDELINES

1. Admission of Students with Special Educational Needs

- i. The application of students with special educational needs is processed by the Admissions Committee. As per the admissions process, the committee may consult relevant faculty members or school personnel in its deliberations, however the Learning Support Teacher/ Coordinator and Guidance Counselor must participate in deliberations on these applications. The outcomes of the admissions committee are submitted as recommendations to the Head of School for final action or decision.
- ii. Full disclosure and partnership between them families of students with identified special educational needs and the school are required. In addition to the regular requirements of The Beacon Academy admissions process, applications of students with identified special educational needs must include:

¹ Learning Diversity in the IB, 2010.

- a. The submission of recent (at least one year prior to application) diagnostic test results and/or assessment reports from qualified neuropsychologists, developmental pediatricians, special educators, or other professionals.
 - b. An interview or series of interviews with parents by the Guidance Counselor and/or Learning Support Teacher or Coordinator.
- iii. The admission of students with identified special educational needs is predicated on the ability of the Academy to provide the necessary support to meet these needs, i.e. whether the school has the necessary human, physical and technical resources to mount such support with reasonable success. Applicants are therefore initially classified according to the levels of learning support required. These levels are
- a. Level 1: The applicant's condition requires time-delimited *minor support*, i.e. consultations, re-teaching, practice, peer tutoring.
 - b. Level 2: The applicant's condition requires time-delimited *remediation*, i.e. content- or skill-specific programs, minor accommodations in class and for assessments, make-up or bridging classes.
 - c. Level 3: The applicant's condition requires regular *intervention*, i.e. based on the assessment of specialists; involve the creation of an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that may include major accommodations in class and for assessment, alternative assessments, and coordination with external specialists.
 - d. Level 4: The applicant's condition requires regular *foundational support*, i.e. based on the assessment of specialists; involves the creation of an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that may require regular pull-outs from class, major accommodations in class, alternative assessments, curricular modifications, and close coordination with external specialists.
- iv. The admissions committee reviews all pertinent documents, including the determined classification of the student. Based on this, the committee determines whether acceptance of the student is advisable, or if the student's needs exceed the functional ability of the regular educational program with provisions of accommodation and differentiation. This decision is submitted as a recommendation to the Head of School as per the admissions process.
- v. Final decisions on admissions are by the Head of School and are communicated to families in a formal letter or enrollment contract signed by the parents.
- vi. Students with identified special educational needs are admitted on a probationary basis, with specific conditions to be fulfilled by the student, families and school are specified in the enrollment contract and serve as criteria for evaluation at the end of every semester.

2. Continuing Enrollment of Students with Special Educational Needs

- i. The continuing enrollment of students with special educational needs—including the lifting of or return to his or her probationary status—is dependent on the semestral evaluation to be conducted by the student's advisory team (see below) although such evaluations may be called for at any point during the academic career of the student at the Academy due to special circumstances. Should the advisory team assess at this time that the school's regular educational program with provisions of accommodation and differentiation is insufficient or exceeds the

functional ability of the school to be of service to the child, it will recommend that the student be counseled out of the Academy for the next academic term.

- ii. Final decisions on continuing enrollment lie with the Head of School and are communicated to families in a formal letter or continuing enrollment contract signed by the parents. The continuing enrollment of students with identified special educational needs may specify specific conditions to be fulfilled by the student, families and school that will serve as criteria for evaluation at the end of every succeeding semester.

3. Teaching and Assessing Students with Special Educational Needs

- i. The school will ensure sound academic advising and the fair, accurate reporting of student progress. It will accomplish this through the creation of Student Advisory teams that will meet regularly for updates on student progress and the identification and implementation of necessary interventions. This team will be composed of the following personnel with corresponding roles and responsibilities:
 - a. Faculty Adviser
 - 1. Functions as the main advocate for the student
 - 2. Maintains regular contact with the student
 - 3. Liaises between parents and other teachers
 - 4. Convenes the team for case conferences.
 - b. Guidance Counselor
 - 1. Collaborates with the Learning Support Teacher/Coordinator to schedule interventions that may assist in determining the nature of differentiation and support needed.
 - 2. Monitors the general socio-emotional development of the student
 - c. Learning Support Teacher/Coordinator
 - 1. Collaborates with the Guidance Counselor to schedule intervention that can assist in determining the nature of differentiation and support needed.
 - 2. Ensures documentation of student performance and progress in relation to the creation, implementation and evaluation of the IEP
 - 3. Monitors students performance and progress in individualized learning support or supervised study sessions
 - 4. Provides learning support initiatives, when necessary
 - d. Academic Coordinator
 - 1. Participates in case conferences and/or Parent-Teacher Conferences, when necessary
 - 2. Liaises with the IBO regarding special accommodations for students, as necessary
- ii. Individual teachers shall endeavor to differentiate their instructional methods and strategies. This is defined as a process through which teachers identify with each learner the most effective strategies for achieving green upon academic goals. The school shall always consider the impact of such strategies on students with special educational needs on the learning of other students.
- iii. Assessment of Learning
 - a. Teachers explore the use of alternative assessments to effectively engage the skills and capabilities of students with special educational needs throughout the semester and during examination periods. The Learning Support Teacher/Coordinator and the Guidance Counselor recommend to teacher's alternative assessments and possible accommodations for students with special educational needs.

- b. Alternative assessments for students with special educational needs may take the form of the following:
 1. Individual or collaborative presentations or performances
 2. Creative projects or outputs
 3. Peer, group and self-assessments
 4. Portfolios
- c. Accommodations during examinations or in activities conducted in fulfillment of a subject's major requirements may be made to the students with special educational needs. These accommodations include but are not limited to the following:
 1. Extensions to deadline
 2. Extensions to examination times or duration
 3. Modification of examinations
- d. Parents of students with special educational needs are informed of such accommodations, assistance or special conditions, as well as provided recommendations on how best to support such students in their preparations by the faculty adviser.
- iv. Teachers are supported and professional development training provided whenever possible so that specialized skills for and best practices in teaching students with special educational needs are learned and cascaded to the community. This includes developing the ability to differentiate curricular requirements without compromising program standards, to creatively and effectively vary the delivery of course content, and to prepare alternative assessment tools when necessary.

4. Learning Support Services

- i. Creation, Implementation and Evaluation of Individual Educational Plans (IEP)
 - a. For students initially classified as 3rd or 4th levels of required learning support, an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is created by the Learning Support Teacher/Coordinator and the Guidance Counselor.
 - b. The IEP is a support plan designed to help students who have special educational needs in identified areas of difficulty. Each plan targets specific learning goals and is applied for a specific period or during which the Advisory Team will conduct intervention sessions with the student. The written plans are reviewed and approved by the Advisory Team, the Dean of Faculty, the Head of School and the parents of the student.
 - c. The effectiveness of the IEP is evaluated on an as-need basis by the Learning Support Teacher/Coordinator and Guidance Counselor during the academic term and is an integral part of the over-all evaluation of student progress at the end of every semester. These evaluations are documented and communicated to parents.
- ii. Individualized learning support sessions for student to work on study skills and identified targets in academic areas such as language, literacy and mathematics.
- iii. Supervised study sessions to monitor fulfillment of class requirements.
- iv. In-class accommodations for specific subject areas/classroom teachers.
- v. After-school academic support sessions.
- vi. Guidance counseling sessions.

- vii. Coordination, through the Learning Support Teacher/Coordinator and Guidance Counselor, with external specialists including tutors, coaches, psychologists and other professionals as authorized in writing by the student's parents or guardians.
- viii. Proposals for curricular modifications that may reflect on the student's official transcript of records. These must be approved by the Dean of Faculty and the Head of School.

5. Parent and Student Involvement

- i. The school encourages the involvement of parents/guardians when making decisions to address the learning requirements of students with special educational needs. Parent participation and involvement in this matter involve the following:
 - a. The submission of all reports and pertinent documents related to the child's condition to the school
 - b. The engagement during meetings with the student's Advisory Team and in Parent-Teacher Conferences.
 - c. The participation in relevant school activities.
- ii. Aligned with the Academy's belief in providing students with the means of taking personal ownership and responsibility of their own learning, the involvement of students with special educational needs in their own learning is likewise encouraged. Thus, such students are enjoined to do the following:
 - a. Engage with the Learning Support Teacher/Coordinator and/or Faculty Adviser in setting goals and targets in their own IEP.
 - b. Maintain knowledge and information on expected academic requirements in his or her subjects.
 - c. Contribute to the selection of materials and activities for their own individualized learning support or study sessions.
 - d. Suggest or negotiate for assessments that will be facilitative of their own learning.

6. Confidentiality and Access to Information

- i. Confidentiality of information pertaining to students with special educational needs must be ensured at all times. Access to academic records is provided to the student's Advisory Team solely for the purpose of monitoring student progress.

POLICY REVIEW

This Policy on Special Educational Needs will be reviewed on a regular basis as needed by the administration and faculty as a whole, in consultation with established guidelines of the school's accrediting organizations. The Policy must be reviewed every five years.