Herbert A. Ammons Middle School
An International Baccalaureate
Middle Years Programme World School
Special Education Needs / Inclusion Policy

Program Philosophy

At Herbert A. Ammons Middle School, we are committed to fostering an inclusive educational environment that respects and addresses the diverse needs of all learners. Aligned with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) philosophy and Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) policies, we ensure equitable access to the curriculum for students with special education needs and exceptional abilities. Our approach emphasizes collaboration, individualized planning, and continuous reflection to empower students to reach their full potential.

Program Information

We recognize that students come from various cultural backgrounds and possess a range of academic needs. Our responsibility is to provide equal access to the curriculum through inclusive practices, including co-teaching models and consultation services. This approach allows students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Section 504 Plans, and Educational Plans (EPs) for gifted students to engage with grade-level material in a general education setting, supported by necessary accommodations, modifications, and enrichment opportunities.

Support for Gifted Students

1. **Identification and Eligibility**:
   Gifted students are identified based on criteria outlined by Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), which includes cognitive assessments, academic performance, and teacher or parent referrals.
2. **Educational Plans (EPs)**:
   Eligible gifted students receive an Educational Plan (EP) tailored to their strengths and needs. The EP outlines goals, learning strategies, and enrichment opportunities designed to challenge and engage gifted learners.
3. **Differentiated Instruction**:
   Teachers use strategies such as curriculum compacting, acceleration, inquiry-based learning, and project-based assignments to provide rigorous and meaningful learning experiences that align with IB principles and the unique needs of gifted students.
4. **IB Integration**:
   Gifted students are encouraged to excel within the IB framework by exploring the IB Learner Profile and Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills in depth. Their learning experiences emphasize higher-order thinking, creativity, and global-mindedness.

5. **Monitoring and Collaboration**:
   Teachers, parents, and counselors collaborate to monitor the progress of gifted students, ensuring that their academic and emotional needs are met. Regular EP reviews ensure that the goals remain relevant and challenging.
6. **Professional Development**:
   Faculty receive ongoing training in gifted education strategies, differentiation techniques, and the integration of IB Standards and Practices to support gifted students effectively.

Implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

1. **Purpose and Development**:
   An IEP is developed for each student eligible for special education services, addressing their specific needs. The plan outlines accommodations, modifications, and services designed to facilitate access to grade-level standards and the IB curriculum.
2. **Support Services**:
   Services may include:
   - Individual or small-group instruction
   - Curriculum adaptations and modifications
   - Physical, occupational, or speech therapy
3. **Parental Involvement**:
   Parents/guardians are integral to the development, review, and implementation of IEPs. Consent is required before implementation, and quarterly progress reports are shared, documenting goal mastery or progress.
4. **Monitoring and Review**:
   Regular IEP meetings are convened to assess student progress and make necessary adjustments, ensuring alignment with IB learner profile attributes.

Section 504 Plans for Students with Disabilities

1. **Eligibility and Process**:
   Students diagnosed with disabilities impacting major life activities may qualify for a Section 504 Plan. Referrals originate through the School Support Team (SST) or directly to the 504 Team when accommodations are clearly needed.
2. **Accommodations**:
   Section 504 Plans may include classroom accommodations, assistive technologies, and additional support services tailored to each student's documented needs.
3. **Annual Review**:
   Plans are reviewed annually to ensure their effectiveness, with reevaluations conducted every three years or as necessary. These reviews incorporate insights from teachers, parents, and students.

Alignment with IB Standards and Practices

1. **Differentiation and Inclusion**:
   Teachers employ differentiated teaching strategies to address diverse needs while maintaining high expectations. This includes modifying assessments and instructional materials as appropriate, without compromising the rigor of the IB curriculum.
2. **Collaboration**:
   The inclusion team collaborates with subject teachers, counselors, and parents to create an environment where students with special needs or exceptional abilities thrive. Collaboration ensures that all students can access the IB Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills and achieve success within the program.
3. **IB Principles in Action**:
   Special education practices incorporate IB principles by:
   - Promoting international-mindedness through varied cultural perspectives
   - Nurturing the learner profile attributes, such as being reflective and principled
   - Providing opportunities for self-advocacy and independence

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Compliance with M-DCPS Special Education Policies

Our special education services adhere to M-DCPS policies, ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and policies for gifted education. We are committed to providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all students with disabilities and exceptional abilities.

Professional Development

Herbert A. Ammons Middle School ensures that all teachers receive ongoing professional development in special education practices, differentiation strategies, and IB philosophy. Training emphasizes:

- Understanding diverse learner profiles
- Implementing accommodations, modifications, and enrichment strategies in assessments
- Supporting students with language, cognitive, or advanced needs in achieving IB objectives

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Rights and Responsibilities of the School Community

Group	Rights	Responsibilities
Students	• Access to equitable, inclusive learning opportunities • Individualized support through accommodations or enrichment • A respectful, safe environment that values diversity	• Engage actively in learning and self-advocacy • Demonstrate respect and empathy toward peers and staff • Follow agreed-upon supports and accommodations
Teachers and Staff	• Professional development and collaboration to meet diverse learner needs • Administrative and peer support for inclusion efforts	• Implement accommodations and modifications with fidelity • Foster inclusive classroom practices aligned with IB principles • Communicate regularly with families and support teams
Families	• Participation in decisions regarding their child's learning and support • Access to information and meetings regarding accommodations and progress	• Collaborate with teachers and counselors • Support inclusive values and reinforce learning at home • Provide relevant documentation and feedback to maintain services

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Policy Review and Evaluation

The Special Education Needs Policy is reviewed annually to ensure alignment with IB MYP Standards and Practices, M-DCPS guidelines, and federal regulations. Feedback from stakeholders, including students, parents, and staff, is integral to this process.

Herbert A. Ammons Middle School remains committed to creating a supportive, inclusive learning environment where every student can achieve their potential.