



Special Educational Needs Policy Signal Mountain Middle/High School



The purpose of this document is to:

- Communicate to all stakeholders in our IB community – administrators, teachers, students, and parents – the programmatic expectations for creating and maintaining an inclusive educational environment for all learners as required by IBO.
- Provide clear guidelines to all stakeholders by defining appropriate vision, goals, and practice in the context of the Middle Years and Diploma Programs within Signal Mountain Middle/High School.
- Establish clear responsibilities of all stakeholders.

****Definition of “special needs” – any permanent or temporary diagnosed need that could put a student at a disadvantage and prevent him/her from being able to demonstrate skills and knowledge adequately.***

At Signal Mountain Middle/High School, we recognize and appreciate that no two students are the same. Every student is, in fact, an individual with unique personal and educational needs. While we encourage all students to embody the IB Learner Profile and strive for academic success, we understand that this is no simple task for many students who are simultaneously trying to overcome other obstacles in their lives and/or in the classroom. The purpose of this document, then, is to outline the best practices for addressing our students with special needs in an effort to allow all students access to the MYP curriculum. As our students and schools continually evolve, so will this document. To stay current, our intention is to reevaluate our special needs population, available services, philosophy, and procedures on an annual basis. This document echoes the policy of the International Baccalaureate (IB) for middle years, diploma and certificate candidates with special assessment needs. “The IB believes that all candidates should be allowed to demonstrate their ability under assessment conditions that are as fair as possible. Where standard assessment conditions could put a candidate with special educational needs at a disadvantage by preventing him or her from demonstrating his or her level of attainment, special arrangements may be authorized. This policy applies to candidates affected by a temporary, long-term or permanent disability or illness, including candidates with a learning difficulty.” (Candidates with Special Needs 1)

What are the goals of the Special Needs Policy?

We are ambitious in our goals for this policy and define them as follows:

- to offer free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to all students in our school system.
- to provide all children access to curriculum through creative and differentiated teaching methods.
- to foster compassion and caring in all of our staff and students to create a safe learning environment.
- to guide all students to reach their unique intellectual capacities.
- to support our students as risk-takers.
- to encourage all students to be global-minded thinkers.
- to communicate with all stakeholders about our students, their progress, and their changing needs.
- to collaboratively monitor success of the policy by analyzing data collected.

What are the expectations of those who have access to this policy?

The only way to ensure success for our students with special needs is to hold all parties responsible for their particular role in this joint endeavor. These parties—or “stakeholders”—include parents, students, families, exceptional education teachers, teachers, staff, IEP Team, and the MYP team, itself. We have the following expectations:

Of Parents/Students/Families

- Families will communicate the special needs of their students to the best of their abilities.
- Families will provide accurate and current special needs documentation (when possible).
- Families will be actively engaged in and supportive of their students’ learning at home.
- Families will take the steps necessary to contact appropriate staff members to voice concerns, clarify programming, and ensure best practices.

Of Teachers/Staff

- Teacher/Staff will familiarize him/herself with the nature and needs of his/her students’ special needs by utilizing school resources and the students 504 Plan or IEP. ????
- Teacher/Staff will be proactive in familiarizing themselves with their students and their individual special need(s) according to the students 504 Plan or IEP.
- Teacher/Staff will seek out and utilize appropriate tools and resources to best serve their special need students.

- Teacher/Staff will provide differentiation and/or accommodation as required and/or needed for the student's success as outlined in the students 504 Plan or IEP.
- Teacher/Staff will respect student privacy and maintain discretion in providing special need services.
- Teacher/Staff will make a concentrated effort to communicate with parents and students as often as necessary and appropriate.

Of the MYP Team (District personnel, administrators, and other staff members)

- The MYP team will provide and maintain safe learning environments for all students.
- The MYP team will collaborate with all stakeholders to inform and guide special needs students in making decisions concerning application to our IB programs.

Who are our students with special needs?

Our special needs student population includes students who have certain challenges—whether permanent or temporary—that limit their ability to perform academically. These challenges could be (but, are not limited to) the following:

- Specific learning disabilities
- Behavioral and/or emotional issues
- Communication and/or language disorders
- Physical and/or sensory conditions
- Medical conditions
- Mental health issues

Students with any of the above listed challenges qualify for one (or more) of the following services: Exceptional Education, counseling support, Section 504 Plan, or other ancillary support programs. Each support department has their own methods for identifying and assessing students in need of services.

Principles

All special arrangements that may be authorized by the IB are based on the following principles. These principles are taken verbatim from Candidates with Special Needs, pages 4-5.

1.1 The IB must ensure that a grade awarded to a candidate in any subject is not a misleading description of that candidate's level of attainment, so the same standards of assessment are applied to all candidates, regardless of whether or not they have special needs.

1.2 Special arrangements are intended to reduce the adverse effects of a candidate's special needs when demonstrating his or her level of attainment. The special arrangements requested for a candidate must not give that candidate an advantage in any assessment component.

1.3 The special arrangements described in this document are intended for candidates with the intellectual capacity to meet all assessment requirements leading to the award of the diploma or certificates.

1.4 The school, not the IB, is responsible for establishing whether the Diploma Programme can be taught and assessed. Advice may be sought from IB Cardiff (sen@ibo.org) before a school accepts a student with special needs; however, this advice is restricted to the implications for internal and external assessment and does not extend to teaching methods and resources.

1.5 If it can be demonstrated that a candidate's lack of proficiency in his or her response language(s) (English, French or Spanish) arises from a diagnosed need, special arrangements may be authorized. (For subjects in groups 3 to 6, all candidates are allowed to use a translating dictionary in the written examinations.)

1.6 The IB aims to authorize special arrangements that are compatible with those normally available to the candidate concerned. However, authorization will only be given for arrangements that are consistent with the policy and practice of the IB. It should not be assumed that the IB will necessarily agree to the arrangements requested by a school. Coordinators are required to provide information on both the candidate's usual method of working in the classroom and under assessment conditions.

1.7 The IB is committed to an educational philosophy based on international mindedness. Therefore, the special assessment needs policy of the IB may not reflect the standard practice of any one country. To achieve equity among candidates with special assessment needs, the policy represents the result of a consideration of accepted practice in different countries.

1.8 The IB will ensure that, wherever possible, arrangements for candidates with a similar type of need are the same. Given that cultural differences occur in the recognition of learning issues and the accommodations allowed, some compromise may be necessary to help ensure comparability between candidates in different countries.

1.9 If special assessment arrangements are necessary for a candidate, consultation with the IB is mandatory. Similarly, if a [Middle Years Program] or Diploma Programme candidate has difficulties meeting the requirements for creativity, action, service (CAS), the appropriate IB regional office must be consulted. Any exceptions are stated in this document. However, a school may provide any kind of special arrangement for a candidate during his or her study of the Middle Years Program assessments or Diploma Programme or trial (practice) examinations.

1.10 A school must not inform an examiner of a candidate's condition or adverse circumstance. Similarly, in the case of internally assessed work, teachers must not make any adjustments when marking a candidate's work. If appropriate, the IB will ensure that reasonable adjustments are considered.

1.11 The IB treats all information about a candidate as confidential. If required, information will only be shared with appropriate IB personnel and members of the final award committee, who will be instructed to treat such information as confidential.

1.12 If special arrangements are authorized for internal assessment, the IB may require the candidate's work to be submitted to IB Cardiff for scrutiny.

1.13 The list of special arrangements available is revised regularly. The IB will consider alternative arrangements proposed by a coordinator, provided those arrangements could be made available to all other similarly affected candidates.

Terminology

Accommodation --A generic term comprising all forms of arrangement, compensation or conditions that may be allowed for a candidate.

Adverse circumstances --Circumstances beyond the control of the candidate(s) that might be detrimental to the performance of the candidate(s) in one or more assessment component (for example, bereavement, natural disasters, civil unrest). "Adverse circumstances" do not include medical conditions or disability.

Assessment component --Each subject and level for the Middle Years and Diploma Programmes are divided into assessment components, for example, paper 1, paper 2 and internal assessment. Some components comprise discrete tasks that are undertaken separately. These separate tasks within a component, such as the map work section for a geography examination paper, are referred to in this document as a "part" of an assessment component.

Exceptional circumstances --Circumstances that are not commonly within the experience of other candidates with special assessment needs. The IB reserves the right to determine which circumstances qualify as "exceptional" and therefore justify a particular special arrangement.

Invigilator --A person, or persons, responsible for supervising an examination. Also referred to as a "proctor" or a "supervisor". The invigilator of an IB examination may or may not be the coordinator.

Special arrangements --Changed or additional conditions during the assessment process for a candidate with special educational needs. These enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her level of attainment more fairly and are not intended to compensate for any lack of ability.

Special assessment needs --A candidate with special assessment needs is one who requires special arrangements in assessment conditions to demonstrate his or her level of attainment.

Special educational needs --This refers to candidates with individual learning needs, who have the intellectual capacity to meet all curriculum and assessment requirements, and who require special arrangements to demonstrate their level of achievement. Candidates who require special assessment arrangements may display the characteristics of one or more of the following special educational needs.

Specific learning issues, language and communication disorders

---*Significant issues in reading, writing, spelling or manipulating numbers associated with issues in processing symbolic language (for example, problems interpreting music notation, dyslexia, dyscalculia).

*Speech and language issues characterized by communication problems (for example, aphasia, dysphasia, articulation problems).

Emotional and behavioral issues (EBD)

- Includes: attention deficit disorder (ADD)/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); [Note: HCPS categorizes ADD/ADHD as OHI, Other Health Impaired] withdrawn, depressive or suicidal attitudes; obsessive preoccupation with eating habits; school phobia; substance abuse; disruptive antisocial and uncooperative behavior; and anger, frustration and violence.

Physical and sensory conditions

- Physical disabilities include a wide range of conditions that are not always immediately obvious, but affect mobility.
- Sensory issues: hearing—embraces an extensive range of hearing loss from mild to profound and can present communication difficulties; visual—includes difficulties with either the structure or function of the eye, affecting vision.

Medical conditions--The most common being: congenital heart disease, epilepsy, asthma, cystic fibrosis, hemophilia, sickle cell anemia, diabetes, renal failure, eczema, rheumatoid disorders, allergies, leukemia and other cancers.

Mental health issues --A wide range of conditions that can affect a person's state of mind, ranging from psychotic conditions, such as schizophrenia and manic depression, to eating disorders, anxieties and emotional distress caused by circumstances in a candidate's life.

Technical language --This refers to terminology specific to the subject being tested. It may be the target of the assessment and must be known by the candidate to understand fully the subject.