



2019 - 20

Merrill Middle School Inclusion Policy

This document is meant to be read in conjunction with Merrill's Language Policy, Assessment Policy, and Academic Honesty Policy.

Philosophy

The Merrill Middle School community believes that all students can learn in the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP). The school strives to accommodate the needs of all students in order to help them reach their individual educational goals. Regardless of where a student is on the educational continuum, Merrill teachers and staff are committed to work together to support individual needs.

Definitions

- **Special educational needs (SEN)**—Any student who requires specialized instruction or differentiation to reach his/her academic and/or behavior goals.
- **Least-restrictive Environment (LRE)**—A placement decision based on each student's IEP, which could include self-contained, collaborative, full-inclusion, or a mixture of all placements.
- **Inclusion**—Students with disabilities are supported in grade-level, general-education classes. Specializing the curriculum to meet their academic needs allows the students to progress academically with their peers.
- **Self-Contained Classroom**—Students with disabilities are removed from the general-education setting and placed in a smaller special-education classroom environment to allow the students to receive individualized instruction.
- **Structured Learning Center (SLC)**- A controlled learning environment for students with significant discrepancies who are pulled from the general-education setting for parts of their day for a community sense of education.
- **Differentiation**—An instructional model where teachers modify instruction to meet the needs of individual students.
- **Co-taught Classroom**—A classroom where curriculum is delivered by both a general-education and special-education teacher. This model allows for immediate modifications and accommodations to be made by the special-education teacher.
- **Individual-education Plan (IEP)**—A legal document that guides the delivery of special-educational supports and services for students with disabilities.
- **Gifted and Talented (GT) Students**—GT Students are students who are identified as possessing outstanding abilities and who are capable of high performance. Gifted and talented children are children who require appropriate instruction and educational services commensurate with their abilities and needs beyond those provided by the regular school program.
- **English Language Learners (ELL)**—An ELL student is any student whose home language is not English and whose English language proficiency is considered limited.

Common Practices and Services in Special Education

- Merrill Middle School adheres to all federal, state, and district policies.
- Merrill offers a full continuum of special education services, with a team consisting of, but not limited to:
 - Executive Director of Student and Family Services
 - Special education Supervisors/Consultants
 - Social workers
 - School Therapists i.e. physical, occupational, emotional, speech
 - School Psychologists
 - Teachers for the visually/hearing impaired
 - Autism Specialists
 - Assistive Technology Specialists
 - Behavior Interventionist and Behavior Coach
 - Special Education Teachers
 - Special Education associates
 - Academic Support Teachers
 - Counselors
- The goal of Merrill is to place students in the least-restrictive environment, while still allowing students to find academic success.
- Levels of service:
 - Smaller Learning Community: serves students with significant discrepancies in academics as well as students with difficulties in social perception and interaction, providing a controlled environment in which students gradually acclimate to the school environment (noise, movement, crowds, etc.) and work on increasing independence.
 - Self-contained classrooms: students receive specialized instruction in particular subject area.
 - Co-taught: contains both general education and special education students and is taught simultaneously by a general education and special education teacher using the same MYP units of work as the non co-taught sections.
- Regardless of the level of service, students with special educational needs receive the same MYP experience as general education students. The program is designed to support students as they complete coursework in the MYP subject areas. Every effort is made to fully integrate MYP into the special education program.
- Parents of special education students are provided progress monitoring notification four times a year. IEP meetings are held annually and as needed.
- Special education teachers are responsible to write, review, and update the IEPs.
- Special education students are continuously monitored to ensure proper placement.
- Staff may refer students to the pupil-services team to ensure students' needs are being met.
- Special education teachers meet regularly with general-education teachers to plan and prepare for students' progress and participation in the general-education classroom. Special education teachers provide each student's IEP to teachers and assist in making accommodations and/or modifications.

- Special education teachers modify culminating tasks according to students' IEPs; special education students use the same IB criterion rubrics as general education students.

Common Practices and Services for 504s

- Merrill's 504 teams are comprised of an administrator, the school counselor, teacher representative and other school faculty members, as needed.
- Students with 504 plans are supported through differentiated instruction, and accommodations including, but not limited to, extended time on testing, materials read aloud and built-in break times to relieve test anxiety. Supports may also meet temporary physical needs of students such as extended passing time, assistance with carrying books, and/or moving classrooms.
- The 504 in-building committee reviews each 504 annually.
- Administration and team leaders notify 504 parents as to yearly plan reviews.
- All teachers of 504 students receive a copy of the 504 plan.

Common Practices and Services for Child Study (Tier 2 & 3)

- Merrill's child study team is comprised of administrators, the school counselor, school psychologist, social worker and special education consultant.
- This team works to develop interventions and individual student plans, refers students to community agencies as necessary, and work to effectively implement special education supports when appropriate.
- Child Study Team meetings are held weekly to monitor student progress and concerns.
- Academic, behavioral, social/emotional data are all analyzed to determine students to be served by the Child Study Team.
- The team looks at classroom interventions, attendance concerns, recommendations to child-guidance therapists, and reevaluation of 504s or IEPs.

Common Practices and Services in Gifted and Talented Education

- Merrill staff members (classroom teachers, administrators, gifted education consultants, etc.) use differentiated strategies and instructional models to provide opportunities to extend learning.
- Gifted services are integrated into the regular curriculum by the classroom teacher whenever possible. Small group opportunities are also offered to students throughout the year beyond regular curriculum.
- The DMPS Gifted and Talented Department screens students each year in the fall for possible identification and subsequent gifted-and-talented programming and services.
- The GT program is led at the building level by the GT consultant.

Common Practices and Services in ELL Education

- The ELL program at Merrill provides English instruction for students whose mother tongue is not English, serving students at the Intermediate and Advanced levels.
- Students are served in large and small group environments. Primary instruction occurs in general education classrooms with teacher collaboration, however, pull-out groups occur as needed.
- To transition out of the program, students must have parent approval by letter of transition and meet criteria standards for levels of proficiency, receive the highest level of proficiency on the

most recent I-ELDA, and receive consent from other core classroom teachers in the building based on academic progress.

Sources:

"English Language Learners." *Des Moines Public Schools*. Des Moines Public Schools, 2014.

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