

# McAuliffe International School

## Special Educational Needs Policy

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*Past Committee Members: Lisa Franco, MI Special Educator*

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### Philosophy

McAuliffe operates with an inclusive philosophy. There are no admission requirements, nor an application of any kind. In our region of Denver, students' parents must select which middle school they will attend through a lottery system. Families who live in the two neighborhoods we serve, Stapleton and Park Hill, are guaranteed a seat in 1 of 5 area schools, McAuliffe being one of them.

In the general education classroom and in common spaces, teachers expect participation from all students at all times. Regardless of skill or cognitive ability, all McAuliffe students benefit from an IB education, particularly the concept-driven curriculum and Approaches to Learning skills that are hallmarks of the Middle Years Programme.

### Center Programs

Our school houses Affective Needs and Multi-Intensive centers. While these students sometimes “mainstream” into the general education classroom, their course of study emphasizes life skills and service when they cannot meet the MYP objectives with supports.

**Affective Needs:** The Affective Needs (AN) Center is a center-based program that offers students with exceptional needs a heightened level of support provided by a team of special education teachers, mental health providers, related service providers, and trained paraprofessionals. Students who have been placed in a center program typically require a more restrictive setting in order to practice and develop their social-emotional skills in a safe space outside of the general education setting due to a disability that directly impacts their ability to access curriculum. In addition to receiving direct instruction in a self-contained classroom setting, highly qualified staff provide a variety of academic and behavioral supports in the general education setting where students can practice the skills needed to be successful in the classroom among typical peers.

The AN Special Education provider ensures that all students placed in the center program continue to receive grade-level instruction in order to close academic learning gaps while also providing direct instruction on appropriate affective skills through on-going collaboration with all teachers and staff working with the student. This includes the development of healthy coping strategies, self-advocacy, building positive relationships with peers and adults, and effective communication to further student achievement and comprehension. Here at McAuliffe, we offer a unique opportunity for students who are otherwise marginalized by promoting a strong sense of community through socialization, athletics, and service learning. Nearly all members of both center programs are involved in sports teams, and every month, the program sets aside one day to assist someone in need within the community.

While being placed in an AN Center typically results in students having a more restricted setting, the AN Center strives to move these students to a fully inclusive setting where students continue to receive necessary emotional supports within the general education classroom. This is made possible through the collaboration of general education teachers, special education teachers, other service providers (such a mental health providers), the family, and, most importantly, the student. Within each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Behavior Intervention Plan, all teachers and staff working closely with the student may be better equipped in assisting him or her achieve lifelong skills required to become happy and successful members of the community.

**Multi-Intensive Center:** The Multi-Intensive (MI) center-based program is staffed with a special education teacher and paraprofessionals, as well as itinerant staff persons (speech language pathologist, school psychologist, occupational and physical therapists and others). Each student is assessed according to their individual needs and the IEP process is implemented.

The program strives to utilize the inclusion model of education. This means the students are included within the general education environment to the greatest extent possible. The Special Education teacher collaborates with the general education teachers to provide support and specifically designed instruction to meet the unique needs of all students. Responsibilities of the Special Education teacher include working in the classroom setting, working with individual or small groups of students to reteach/reinforce concepts taught, and modifying curriculum and assessments based on student need. The Special Education teacher also teaches supplemental classes that focus on academic gaps and are tailored to specific goals and individual student needs, as well as leveled literacy and math classes.

The MI classroom is committed to meeting the needs of all identified students. By collaborating with specialists and parents and by following all mandated laws, the program strives to develop all of our learners to the best of their ability. Utilizing the learner profile attributes of open-minded, communicators, and caring, our students are nurtured and supported and challenged to take control of their own education as they become lifelong learners.

McAuliffe offers a unique opportunity that allows the students placed within the Multi-Intensive program to enhance their pre-vocational skills. The school food bank is housed within the classroom and the students are responsible for the operation of this program. They help unload the trucks (up to 1 ton of goods), categorize and restock the shelves, and prepare weekly food bags to go home with needy students on Fridays. This helps develop important vocational skills that will positively impact their futures.

### Needs

Outside of the center-based programs, the educational needs of our students span a range and vary in complexity. Most students receiving services need supports with language: vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Some need extra supports in order to develop number sense, and yet others need curricula beyond grade level. Others have learning challenges and/or medical issues that require additional supports. For a small percentage of students, English is not their mother tongue, and these students need English language acquisition supports.

### Tools

The following tools are available to McAuliffe teachers and specialists. Qualified proctors deliver the appropriate assessment(s) to the child identified as having educational support needs.

- Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI): identifies reading Lexile level
- Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA): measures proficiency in English
- Interim benchmark assessments: measure the learning of reading, writing, and mathematics curricula
- District World Languages exams: measure fluency in Spanish or French
- SuccessMaker: generates mathematics grade level equivalents
- i-Ready: assesses students and works with them to help fill in reading gaps
- Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS): measures achievement of state standards in science, social studies, language arts and mathematics
- Ravens: measures general intelligence
- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT): assesses general cognitive ability
- Kingore Observation Inventory (KOI): identifies gifted and talented students
- Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) questionnaire: measures behavioral performance of children
- NNAT2: measures nonverbal general ability to qualify for gifted and talented services
- Achieve3000: measures and monitors reading ability by Lexile

### Services

Most identified students at McAuliffe receive in-class accommodations and modifications provided by a special educator and implemented in collaboration with the special education case manager and general education teacher. Open communication between the teacher and case manager is essential for supporting the students receiving these services. For a student who needs support with basic language skills, for example, the teacher might provide an audio version of a text or shorten the length or complexity of a writing assignment. On the other hand, a gifted student's

teacher may provide an alternative, more complex text or allow for an independent study of the unit's key concept.

At times, students with specific learning disabilities leave the general classroom to receive their services. Students with significant reading skill deficits take a class that uses the Orton-Gillingham/i-Ready Reading Diagnostic. The math intervention course utilizes components of blended learning to support students. McAuliffe's special education coordinator is responsible for managing the extent and duration of services that students receive.

These students who are not functionally literate in English (McAuliffe's language of instruction) or who do not demonstrate basic math skills will often take an additional "elective" course in lieu of a Language Acquisition course, as the cognitive requirements of a Phase 1 Language Acquisition course are too not developmentally appropriate. These placements will be clearly communicated to the student, parents/guardians, and involved teachers.

A gifted and talented coordinator manages the services gifted and talented learners receive. Students identified as gifted and talented, in addition to receiving their in-class groupings and extensions, have the opportunity to participate in a number of enrichment activities, including National Geographic Bee, Mathletics, chess club, NanoWrimo/GoodReads, National History Day, Night of the Notables, World Affairs Challenge, Destination Imagination, a spelling bee, independent studies, university talent searches, Shakespeare Club, et cetera.

We also have a mental health team comprised of a nurse, a school psychologist, and three counselors to serve the needs of students with exceptional social-emotional needs.

### External Requirements

The following documents are federal, state and district documents that formalize the services that students receive.

- Individualized Educational Plan (IEP): from IDEA, provides accommodations (SLD, ED) and modifications (MI, physical disability)
- 504: from Americans with Disabilities Act, provides accommodations due to learning challenges and/or medical issues
- Individual Literacy Plan (ILP): monitors students reading below grade level
- Advanced Learning Plan (ALP): articulates grouping strategies, extensions, enrichment, alternative content, and curriculum compacting
  - It is important to note that sometimes students can be "twice exceptional," which means that they have both an IEP for a learning disability and an ALP for gifted and talented ability.
- English Language Acquisition (ELA) plans: monitor language development for students with No English Proficiency (NEP), Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and Fluent English Proficiency (FEP)

### Policy Maintenance

- ❖ The special educational needs policy steering committee, or substitute representatives, will review the policy once during each academic year. Significant changes in philosophy, practice, or external requirements will require that the committee revise the policy.
- ❖ The MYP coordinator will communicate changes to the Instructional Leadership Team.
- ❖ The most recent special educational needs policy will always be available to the school community on McAuliffe's public website.