

OMS and OHS Schools: 6-12 Special Needs Policy

*Definition of "special needs" – any permanent or temporary diagnosed need that could put a student at a disadvantage and prevent him from being able to adequately demonstrate skills and knowledge (Special Cases, Article 15).

In Oxford Community Schools, we recognize and appreciate that no two students are the same. Every student is, in fact, a general education student first with individual and 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. This document outlines the common practices for addressing our students with special needs in an effort to allow *all* students as much access to the MYP curriculum as practicable. As our students and schools continually evolve, so will this document. To stay current, our intention is to revisit the needs of our special education population, availability and effectiveness of services, philosophy, and procedures on a bi-annual basis (or as needed).

Policy Goals:

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

- to offer free and appropriate education 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 support our students as risk-takers.
- to encourage all students to be global-minded thinkers.
- to communicate with and provide professional development for all stakeholders about our students, their progress, and their changing needs.
- to collaboratively monitor success of the policy by analyzing data collected.

Policy Expectations:

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, teachers, staff and administrators. 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

- Staff will be proactive in familiarizing themselves with their students and their individual special need(s).
- Staff will seek out and utilize appropriate tools and resources- including active

collaboration with their co teacher- to best serve their special need students.

- Staff will respect student privacy and maintain discretion in providing special need services.
- Staff will make a concentrated effort to communicate with parents and students as often as necessary and appropriate.

Administrators (including district personnel and other staff members)

- The team will provide and maintain safe learning environments for all students.
- The team will collaborate with all stakeholders to inform and guide special needs students in making decisions concerning educational programming.

Students with Learning or Special Educational Needs

Our special educational 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
- Grief- related issues
- Second language barriers
- Other factors that place students at-risk

Students with any of the above listed challenges may qualify for one (or more) of the following services: Special Education, counseling support, English as Second Language, or other ancillary support programs. Each support department has their own methods for identifying and assessing students in need of services.

Identification of Special Education students

Students entering Oxford Community Schools are identified as a student with special education needs by parents, previous school district, or healthcare professionals. We then review the previous district's documentation and determine what services the student should receive and if/when we need to reevaluate that student.

Those students who have not received services in the past can be referred for a Special Education evaluation by their parent or guardian or by school staff. If an evaluation for special education services is requested, it will be conducted by the rules in accordance with federal and State of Michigan guidelines (IDEA and MARSE) in order to appropriately place students in the least restrictive environment as deemed by the relevant stakeholders. All support decisions in regards to student educational needs will be based on student progress.

Special Education Services

Depending on the student's determined degree of need, there are a variety of instructional services that Oxford Secondary Schools can offer that students, from the least to the greatest restrictive environment.

Identification of EL students

Identification of EL students can be found in the Oxford Community Schools Board approved policy: 2225 - LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PROGRAM. Service for these students is defined in the Oxford Secondary Schools Language Protocol.

In the event that an EL student is also a student special educational needs, the student's support services and accommodations take precedence. The EL instructor communicates and collaborates with the caseload teacher to guide lesson planning and offer feedback for state testing accommodations."

Identification for Counseling Support

Students work with their counselor once a year to develop an educational development plan (EDP). Those students who express a need for further counseling services are seen by their counselor as often as is appropriate for that student's particular situation. If a teacher or parent requests counseling support for a student, an assist team convenes to create a plan for that student's academic success. Invitations to the assist team include: parent or guardian, student's counselor, and an administrator, and input from all of the student's teachers (general education and/or special education) and the student if applicable. If a need is expressed that substantially limits one or more major life activities (such as physical impairment, a chronic condition, or communicable disease) the process of determining eligibility for a 504 plan begins, as guided by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

As emotional or otherwise traumatic experiences occur throughout the school year, students are aware that counseling support is available to them. Counselors take walk-in students with issues that demand immediate attention and rely on other staff and students to share concerns about students who might not be as forthcoming with their issues. Also, the counseling department generates a list each semester that indicates which students are receiving low, troubling grades. The counselors bring in these students to discuss what might be hindering their academic success and devise plans to overcome these hindrances.

Additional Services

Students with social or emotional difficulties often struggle immensely to focus and function throughout the general education day. These students with special needs receive direct social work services to ensure that students have access to the curriculum in spite of their social or emotional difficulties.

Due to the varying degrees of disabilities and special needs of students, other ancillary services are also available. These services include:

- Physical Therapy (PT)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Speech and Language Therapy (SLP)

The PT program works on the students' gross motor deficits, mobility within the school environment, and adapting physical education programs. The OT program targets fine motor deficits, organization of the students' daily supplies, handwriting, and feeding issues. The SLP focuses on improving articulation and language skills of the students. All programs and relative staff collaborate with the classroom and special needs personnel to develop and implement the individualized program to

ensure student success. The individual goals and programs for these services are determined at each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting. Therapists travel to schools within the district to work with their students. Home programs are sometimes given to parents to reinforce what the student and therapist have worked on at school. Annual goals are developed at the IEP meeting and progress is monitored throughout the year.

Oakland Schools provides additional supports and services for students with more complex needs. (e.g. vision, hearing, traumatic brain injury, etc.)

Students with Learning or Special Educational Needs and the MYP

The MYP is intended to be an inclusive program that can cater to all students. Our approaches to learning (ATL) help teachers and students respond in a flexible way to varied learning needs, including special educational needs of all kinds. The MYP approach to assessment recognizes the importance of assessing the processes of learning as well as the product of learning. When designing MYP units, teachers need to employ techniques for assessing student work that take into account the diverse ways in which individual students understand and communicate their experiences. Without compromising standards, assessment tasks should take into account the requirements of students with special needs and those who are learning in a language other than their mother tongue.

We recognize that there are some students who are incapable of fully participating in the MYP and course offerings. Though the curriculum might be too rigorous for these students, they will still be aware of the IB principles and encouraged to embody the IB Learner Profile in every way possible at their particular learner level. Our goal is to give students the highest level of access to the programme as practicable, following the philosophy that all students are general education students first.

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