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LEARNER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY*

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OUR VISION

“Everyone can learn - just not in the same day or same way”.

OUR MISSION

Grassroots School believes education is a lifelong journey. The organisation aims to spark curiosity, imagination and love for lifelong learning whilst nurturing young minds to be caring, empathetic and responsible citizens of the global world. To this end we prepare our children to meet 21st century challenges with creativity and confidence thereby building a peaceful and sustainable community through international mindedness. In India, myths, fear and ignorance are in abundance. We aim to provide safe learning spaces where children have freedom to make mistakes, become knowledgeable and help each other, while championing the human race forward in areas of equality, equity and harmony.

There are 5 primary objectives for the school:

- 1) To focus on quality education, through best-evidence practices, and to provide an environment that is full of opportunities for every child to explore thereby bringing out their individual potential,
- 2) The formative years (15 months – 6 years) are most critical for life long development especially when complemented by quality primary education which forms the first recognized and most vital stage for formal education.
- 3) Education provided during these years should be with a focus on holistic development rather than on educational achievements.
- 4) The quality of education provided should be well designed to meet individual needs while simultaneously equipping them for the global demands of the 21st Century.
- 5) No child should be denied their right to education based on their abilities and the school should be an institute that promotes acceptance and tolerance to all.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) POLICY

INCLUSION PRACTICES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS STUDENTS

PURPOSE

Grassroots School has a responsibility to provide access to the curriculum and academic rigor for all students, including opportunities to pursue individual interests, regardless of individual abilities and needs. The pedagogy of Grassroots School, is enriched by the diversity it encourages within the school and strongly believes in providing quality education to all children. With this in mind, it recognizes the need for a coherent and strong guiding policy for students with special learning needs, so that they have the opportunity to access learning and be integrated into mainstream classrooms without fear of discrimination or distress.

POLICY STATEMENT

The school mission statement to make quality education accessible to all children inspires the forming of a Special Education Needs Policy. At the time of admission for new students or at any point in the student's time at school, the school counsellor is available on hand to identify children who require special attention in regard to social behaviour,

adapting to the local and school environment as well as those who require academic differentiation in terms of learning difficulties or learning challenges.

DEFINITIONS

- **Special Educational Needs (SEN)** refers to students who show documented need of support or challenge beyond the standard curriculum. We recognize the wide spectrum of needs and abilities along a continuum.
- **Inclusion** refers to providing access to all components of the IB-PYP program for all students. Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers. (Learning diversity and the IB Programmes: Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes, 2010:3)
- **Differentiation** is an instructional design model that modifies the written, taught, and assessed curriculum in order to meet individual needs.

PRINCIPLES

- All students can learn; all students have a right to a holistic, inclusive education in a caring and stimulating environment.
- We place great emphasis on the responsibilities of all teachers to be aware of and provide for students with special educational needs.
- We believe all students should be responsible for their own learning by taking an active role in identifying, monitoring, and meeting their own learning needs and abilities.
- We view a student's education as a partnership between the student, the parent(s)/guardian(s), the school and teachers, and the community.
- We recognize that modifying curriculum and coursework to meet an individual student's needs may be necessary and appropriate.

DEFINITION OF LEARNING DIVERSITY NEEDS

A student has specific educational needs if she/he:

- Is identified with special needs and has a significantly greater difficulty in achieving the age appropriate milestones thereby facing learning challenges.
- Is identified as Gifted and has a significantly greater ability and has reached milestones beyond their age. They often require additional support, due to extraordinary talent in a subject or extra-curricular area.
- Has a disability which prevents or hinders the student from making use of an educational facility.
- Has behavioural challenges that hinders the learning process.

A Student must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language spoken at home is different from the language of the school.

GIFTED AND TALENTED SERVICES

When a student is identified as being gifted and talented, teachers are to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of the student. At Grassroots School, gifted and talented students are mainstreamed in the general education classroom using differentiation for deeper rigor and challenge. We also provide accelerated classes in math, science, and individuals and societies. Data points help determine student

placement in the accelerated courses. In addition, students will be provided opportunities to take part in activities such as the spelling bee, which encourage advanced learning and challenging activities.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS SERVICES

English Language Learners (ELL) are identified as those students who have a Home Language other than English and are at some stage, from beginning to advanced, of listening, speaking, reading and writing in English at a level comparable to their native English-speaking peers. The classroom teacher works together with other teachers to plan and differentiate content instruction so that grade-level curriculum is made accessible to the English language learner. Collaborative instruction is based on research that shows that school-aged children acquire language more effectively through participation in meaningful, language-rich activities along with their native speaking peers, rather than solely through isolated and targeted English instruction as a separate subject. Classroom teachers are perceptive to the educational needs of their students. The goal is to maximize the students' success in accessing content through language in the classroom.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The following disability categories are recognized and serviced for Special Education Serviced by Grassroots School.

- DD – Developmentally Delayed
- ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder
- DB - Deaf/Blind
- EBD - Emotional/Behavioural Disorders
- DHH – Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- DCD - Developmental Cognitive Disability
- OHD – Other Health Disabilities
- PI – Physically Impaired
- TBI – Traumatic Brain Injury
- SLD – Specific Learning Disability
- SL – Speech/Language Impairment
- VI – Visually Impaired
- SMI – Severely Multiple Impaired

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC EDUCATION NEEDS

During the time of admission of a child with previously identified specific education needs by the professionals such as paediatricians and clinical psychologists, the school's special needs coordinator thoroughly studies the child's medical history reports, interviews the parents, and observes the child. The child is further assessed in an individual set-up wherein he/she are given with age appropriate tasks and/or activities. The child is also assessed in a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) the classroom to see their functionality within a group set-up. The child will be granted admission if the child has difficulties which can be handled according to the school's provisions.

Students with specific education needs are identified by the SEN Coordinator. The grade level teachers will monitor the child and observe their academic /behavioural /emotional difficulties in the classroom. Students with special education needs are identified on the basis of their:

- medical history
- psychological testing
- discrepancy between the current level of academic functioning and the same age appropriate milestones

After the analysis of the tests, if the child requires specific support, the child's parents are informed. He/she will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) designed and the child attends specific needs classes. If the child exhibits behavioural concern, specific behaviour protocols are put in place within the classroom based on the Managing Challenging Behaviour Policy.

If a special educational need for a student has been previously unidentified, or undisclosed by the parents, and the first instance is noticed by the teacher during their interaction with the child in the classroom, the teacher consults with the SEN Coordinator to take action. In severe or clinical cases, the child is referred to external support services (Therapist- Speech, Occupational, Educational Psychologist) for further consultation.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP) TEAM

A continuum of special education services is available for students who have a disability as defined by criteria established by the and who demonstrate the need for special education and related services. A team, including the student, the parents, classroom teachers, school administrator, and special education staff develop, review, and revise the IEP.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS (IEPs)

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are written for students who are identified for special education services. These plans will be written at the start of each academic year and revised annually. Parents, SEN Coordinator, Head of School and the Special Educator will be present to decide on the goals. The IEPs are confidential, and are shared with other school staff on an as needed basis. For students with IEPs, the special education staff along with the classroom teachers will discuss to ensure a smooth transition from one level to another.

SERVICE MODELS

Students with disabilities are serviced in the least restrictive environment. We use the following:

- Students with disabilities participating in the general education classroom may receive assistance from the classroom teacher or teaching assistant.
- Students with disabilities who participate in the general education classroom may need direct small group instruction services outside of the classroom.
- Students who are eligible for a higher level of support may be placed in specialized programs/pull-out outside the classroom but within the school.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations, based on the student's IEP, will be provided so that students can demonstrate their knowledge and mastery of the skills being taught. Accommodation on district and state tests will be provided based on guidelines set forth by the Minnesota Department of Education.

COLLABORATION

General education teachers and special education staff work together to identify, support, and adapt the curriculum and assessment to meet the student's needs. The teachers and staff seek to include parents' views and input as we collaborate to meet the needs of the students receiving special services.

INTERVENTIONS

At Grassroots School, there are a variety of supports available to all students who are not making adequate progress. These include but are not limited to small group instruction, extra support in the general education classroom, social work and/or counselling support.

DIFFERENTIATION

Teachers are committed to identifying the most effective strategies for each learner. Teachers will scaffold curriculum and learning experiences to ensure that all students understand the concepts. When needed, teachers will modify and accommodate the curriculum.

Once a special education need is identified, the Head of School along with the class teacher and SEN Coordinator formulate a plan of differentiated learning and engagement for the student. Teachers have the support of the school's unique pedagogy which allows them to meet the needs of children within the main stream classroom.

Our pedagogy involves the use of multi-sensorial tasks which are meaningful and based on real-life experiences. They encourage active corporeal involvement to facilitate understanding. The activities and the assessment tasks are ideally suited to differentiation in terms of expected criteria and generated resource, so that a student may choose the means best available to them to demonstrate their understanding of a concept.

CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS, TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS

Grassroots School has a full-time special education teacher who conducts training sessions for all staff members. The classroom accommodations to be made for every child with unique needs are planned and communicated by conducting collaborative meetings with the classroom teachers, parents of the child, SEN Coordinator and the special educator.

At Grassroots School, differentiation is a long-term whole-school strategy that enables the community to maintain the momentum to transform teaching and learning habits, develop classroom relationships and expectations, and address suitable patterns of assessment that reflect the shift in thinking. Learners have a preferred way of thinking. The teachers are sensitive to this variety, and are flexible enough in their thinking to accommodate those who may not perform in the generally accepted way.

Differentiation can help learners access the content at an appropriate level through a variety of resources, and is an integral part of each teacher's curriculum planning.

We differentiate the instruction through:

- CONTENT (What students learn?),
- PROCESS (how students learn?),
- PRODUCT (How students demonstrate their learning?),
- ENVIRONMENT (How can we modify the environment to support their learning?).

PROCEDURES FOR ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Each IEP provides accommodations for assessment for those students who demonstrate a need. Each

accommodation is specifically described. Students are provided accommodations as described in the IEP to enhance their ability to demonstrate understanding of the five essential elements of the Primary Years

Programme. A complete list of

DOCUMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES THAT ARE IN LINE WITH IB STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

- An Individualized Education Plan is maintained for all the students with special needs after the assessment in order to enhance the skills that are deficient for the overall performance of the child.
 - Individual case files are maintained to record the progress of each child with special education needs.
 - Communication of the child's progress and other details happens through end of the term discussions and annual reports with the parents.
 - The formative and summative tasks are differentiated using assessment strategies and tools according to the child's abilities.
 - The child's progress is recorded on a daily basis using a daily log sheet maintained by the special educator and is validated by the SEN Coordinator. They are further discussed on a weekly basis via internal communication among the concerned faculty of the children with special needs.
 - All class room teachers regularly meet with special educators in order to collaborate on curriculum and assessment, to reflect on student learning, and to plan for differentiation.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

All teachers receive training to promote an understanding of the components of their respective programs. Teachers and support staff receive staff development on strategies to meet special educational needs in the classroom as well as in the general school environment.

All teachers (including SEN teachers) regularly meet horizontally and vertically to collaborate on curriculum and assessment, to reflect on student learning, and to plan for differentiation.

SEN POLICY REVIEW PROCESS

This policy is a living document. It has been created using IB support materials, local school data and input from stakeholders in the school's learning community. It is an ongoing process that will be systematically reviewed, evaluated and modified as needed by the staff, coordinators and administration. The committee will be made up of the Head of School, IB coordinators, and SEN Coordinator. The purpose of the committee will be to review the current document, revise as needed, and plan how to communicate current practices to staff.

CONCLUSION

At Grassroots School, there is a general understanding that teachers, students and their parents form a unique learning community working towards common goals. This belief affects the way in which inclusivity is understood and provided in the school.