

Special Education Policy

Policy Special Needs Education Policy	Adopted: September 27, 2018
	Reviewed:

Introduction

The Special Education Policy is a summary of how Mountain Christian School meets the mandated requirements of the Ministry of Education.

Mountain Christian School operates with a ‘special education mindset’ where what is fair isn’t always equal, and where one size does not fit all. It is our goal that our students will benefit greatly from an effective program that will be used as a useful instrument to improve services to our students with special learning or behaviour needs.

Definitions

Awareness: Teachers have an understanding of the academic, social and emotional needs of children who struggle in the school environment. Creating this awareness and advocating for these children is a major role for the administrator and/or the special education teacher.

Accommodations: Teachers are flexible, making accommodations in their expectations for students so that each child can experience a measure of success on a daily basis. The special education teacher advocates for such flexibility. (* Definition: Special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required to enable the student to learn and to demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not alter curriculum expectations for the grade level.)

Modifications: For students with significant learning difficulties, it is necessary to modify program expectations, and to provide resource assistance. The special education teacher will help to identify learning needs and to plan the overall program for these students. (* Definition: Change in curriculum content which does not meet grade level expectations e.g. reduced or simplified expectations, out of grade level testing.)

Access: If there are students who struggle academically and/or socially and emotionally, the school will make every effort to have a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) or Educational Assistant (EA) available on a regular basis.

“**Special Education**” is an umbrella term that is used consistently to describe the range of services available to students with learning exceptionalities. The term is used in the following contexts: special education ... teacher, coordinator, program, services, department, and withdrawal classes. The term “**Special Needs**” is sometimes used interchangeably with “exceptional needs or exceptionalities”. The term “learning exceptionalities” is used as a general term, while the term “special needs” is used to refer specifically to students with high needs or multiple exceptionalities, such as autism, spina bifida, Down Syndrome, FAS, etc.

School based education team: A group of individuals who are responsible to create, implement, and monitor a student’s Individual Education Plan. This group may consist of Parents, student, teacher, special education teacher, educational assistants, principal, doctors, social workers, psychiatrists, counselors, behavior therapists, OT, PT, SLP, or any other community and/or health professional that are deemed necessary.

Philosophy of Special Education

At Mountain Christian School, we recognize that each child has a God-given unique learning style, and we aim to provide an educational program that promotes areas of student strength and accommodate and help students develop in areas of needs and challenges.

We strive to ensure that all students are welcomed and included in their learning environment in the following areas: social, physical, spiritual and academic. Our I.E.P. development deals with each of these areas of need. We aim to help students reach their full academic, social, spiritual and emotional potential. We believe that this process is most effective when educators work in collaboration with the students' families as well as with any community and/or health professionals that may be involved in their lives.

Mountain Christian School will, for every child, create an *inclusive* program; meaning; the school team will make every effort to provide a program where each student can feel like they are an integral part of our school body. This does not mean that every child will be fully *integrated* into the classroom. We believe that for some student inclusion will happen more successfully when the student is learning outside of the standard classroom and placed in a hands-on life skills or workplace program, or in a one-to-one or small group setting. At the same time, our explicit goal is to help all students accept and love each other where they are presently at, and challenge them to grow from there. We, therefore, encourage students to maintain friendships across all boundaries, including social, economic, race, creed and academic ability.

There are five key facets to how we accomplish the goal of meeting student needs and delivering a high quality special education program:

- 1) Creating an environment that values group learning as well as individual instruction; allowing students to learn in a wide variety of ways.
- 2) Creating a classroom environment that models Biblical love and respect for all students from the teacher-down.
- 3) Recognizing the contributions of all students to the life of the school (including awards, kindness walls and other public and private recognition).
- 4) Effective communication:
 - a. between teachers and educational assistants, and between staff and Administration regarding student identification, I.E.P. development and program implementation.
 - b. with parents/guardians regarding child progress and behaviour, as well as I.E.P. development and implementation.
 - c. with the Ministry of Education regarding the latest policy, practice, funding and available resources.
- 5) Accessing local support professionals for assessment and I.E.P. development.

Criteria and Procedures

Classroom Screening

1. The classroom teacher recognizes that the student is experiencing difficulty in learning.
2. The teacher initiates the problem-solving process through assessments and MCS approved accommodations. The teacher discusses concerns with the special education teacher, the previous teacher, reviewing information in the student file, making initial program adjustments, etc.
3. The teacher communicates with the parents to gather additional and relevant information.
4. Parents may advise the teacher of a concern and initiate the request for assessment.

Referral Process

1. The classroom teacher completes the Special Education referral form.
2. The principal approves the referral for assessment.
3. The classroom teacher contacts the parents, explaining the request for a special education assessment.
4. The special education teacher sends home a form requesting permission to complete a diagnostic assessment.
5. Parents return the signed permission form to the school.

Assessment Process

1. The Special Education Teacher reviews request and may ask for addition information such as work samples, assessments, and behavior observations.
2. The Special Education teacher, in consultation with the Principal, will determine if the student requires additional accommodations made to the existing program or if a formal assessment is necessary.
3. If deemed necessary, and with parental consent, a request will be made for diagnostic testing.
4. The school support team prepares recommendations regarding optimal placement for the delivery of special education services. The final placement determination is made by the principal.
5. Once testing is complete all I.E.P. team members will be provided with the results and be invited to participate in the I.E.P. development process.

The Individual Education Plan

1. Students have a right to actively participate in the development, implementation, and monitoring of their I.E.P.
2. Parents have right to actively participate on their child's school-based education team.
3. Implementation is a joint responsibility shared by the student's education team.
4. I.E.P.'s must reflect students' designation and must primarily include goals as per assessment recommendations. All I.E.P. should consider but are not limited to:
 - a. Academic skills
 - b. Communication skills
 - c. Cognitive skills
 - d. Fine and gross motor skills
 - e. Self-care
 - f. Life skills
 - g. Language development
 - h. Auditory development
 - i. Speech development
 - j. Social needs
 - k. Behaviour needs
 - l. Transition needs
5. I.E.P.'s must be reviewed, and updated, every reporting period, reflecting changes to the students circumstances, progress, as well as transition plans.

Special Education Files:

Each student that requires special education services will have a file that includes:

1. Administrative information
 - a. Categorical checklist
 - b. Parent form
 - c. Contracts with professionals
2. Diagnostic Information
 - a. Initial and subsequent diagnosis
3. Professional Assessments
 - a. Psycho-educational assessments
 - b. Behaviour assessments
 - c. OT,PT, SLP reports
4. School based information
 - a. Team meeting minutes
 - b. I.E.P. minutes
 - c. Correspondence with I.E.P. team members, such as emails, phone calls, and other consultation meetings.
5. Individual Education Plan

Physical Restraint Policy

Rationale:

Mountain Christian School is responsible for maintaining a safe and secure environment for all students and staff. In order to meet this responsibility, MCS accepts that on occasions where the physical actions of a student threaten to cause harm to self or others, it may be necessary to physically restrain the student.

Guidelines for use of physical restraint:

1. Physical restraint will be used only as a last resort when the restrainer believes that safe control cannot be established in any other way. If at all possible other students will be removed from danger and the Principal and parents will be called to intervene.
2. When physical restraint is used, it will be used with only the amount of force necessary to protect both the restrainer and the restrained.
3. Physical restraint will be used only in situations where there is an immediate risk of injury to the student or to another person due to the physical behaviour of the student.
4. Parents/guardians of students identified as possibly requiring restraint will be informed of restraint techniques used by the school personnel in the event that their child has been restrained.

Procedure

The procedures involve the three basic steps of restraining, debriefing and documenting.

1. Physical contact should be conducted:
 - a. With controlled, unemotional and reassuring statements that give reasons for the restraint and describe the necessary behaviour for ending the restraint.
 - b. With the least amount of force to protect the student and restrainer, and to achieve the required change in behaviour.
 - c. In the presence of another adult when possible.
2. Debriefing will occur after the student is calmed down and receptive, so that both the restrainer and the student are comfortable with the resolution. The student should be encouraged to state what happened and to state alternative appropriate behaviour.
3. Documentation and review include:
 - a. Time and location of incident.
 - b. Written statements by each adult involved that describe the event which led to the restraint and the resolution.
 - c. Indication that notification of the restraining has been communicated as soon as possible to both the principal and the parents in writing.
 - d. Names of all people involved or witnessing the incident.
 - e. Debriefing with personnel directly involved in the restraint.
 - f. If restraint is required more than once, a meeting with concerned personnel and parents/guardians in order to discuss future strategies.

Privacy Issues

Confidentiality

It is assumed that professionals keep all information about students confidential. There should be yearly reminders of this.

Requests for non-school personnel to observe or work with students

If there is a request for observation of students by non-school personnel and/or a practicum student, coordinators should go over the issue of confidentiality carefully. Parents should be informed.

Ethics of Touch – some guidelines on personal care

1. As students get older, two people are needed for toileting. Parents should have input and remain involved in the decision making about procedure.
2. Monitor on a situation by situation basis, when and if, a male attendant becomes essential for a male student.
3. Educational Assistants and Subs must be trained for all personal care situations.
4. Feminine hygiene – a plan must be put together with parents. Social stories with prompts/cues are helpful.

Sharing of Student files with other schools

1. Send originals but keep copies of important information (sometimes the students return and the file gets lost in the transition).
2. Learning Assistance – send student plans, educational checklists, testing results (not daily log notes).
3. Special Education – send testing results, info for government grants, I.E.P.'s.

Keeping Staff Members informed (working with the team)

Teamwork requires ongoing communication among members of the team and/or department. All MCS staff are expected to attend special education meetings when necessary. Reviewing those expectations at the beginning of the year, within the department and also with the whole staff, can keep support services for students functioning smoothly. The appendix contains a sample for educational assistant orientation at the beginning of the year

Mountain Christian School Teachers:

The teacher responsible for a student with special needs is responsible for **designing, supervising** and **assessing** the educational program for that student. Where the student requires specialized instruction, this is best done in consultation with resource personnel available, with the parents and with the student.

Where the student's program involves specialized instruction set up by the Special Education Teacher, collaborative processes are required to make best use of the expertise of the specialists available to assist and to ensure a coordinated approach.

Mountain Christian School Educational Assistants

Educational assistants play a key role in many programs for students with special needs, performing functions which range from personal care to assisting the teacher with instructional programs. Under the direction of a teacher they may play a key role in implementing the program.

Special Needs Education Protocols

1. Provides support to the teacher to ensure a safe and stimulating educational environment.
2. Assists the teacher in planning and preparation for daily activities; aids instructional efforts of the teacher.
3. Assists the teacher in preparing lesson curricula in assigned areas.
4. Uses various teaching aids for use in classroom, including activity sheets, drawings, and similar handouts.
5. Presents subject matter to students, under the guidance of a teacher, utilizing a variety of methods including stories, discussions, and role playing.
6. Assists children, individually or in groups, with lesson assignments to reinforce learning concepts.
7. Keep ongoing observations and records for specific students to help the teacher evaluate the progress of students.
8. Performs miscellaneous job-related duties as assigned.
9. Educational Assistants are, in no part, responsible for the development, implementations, or assessment of lessons, units, or course overviews (I.E.P. or otherwise). Consequently, a educational assistant must direct all such concerns to classroom teacher. Educational Assistants must direct parental concerns to the teacher involved.

Parents

Parents of students with special needs know a great deal about their children that can be helpful to school personnel in planning educational programs for them.

The School Endeavours to involve parents in the planning, development and implementation of educational programs for their children. This consultation should be sought in a timely and supportive way, and the input of parents respected and acknowledged.

- 1) Parents have a responsibility to support the education of their children.
- 2) At the request of the teacher or principal, vice principal or director of instruction, a parent must consult with respect to the student's educational program.
- 3) **Parents need to be alert to significant behaviour changes.** Being aware of significant behaviour changes which could indicate progress or problems is vital. Parents need to observe their child in his or her social relationships, free time, work habits etc.
- 4) **Parents need to inform staff** of factors which may place a child with special needs or other children at risk on a need-to-know basis, without violating the privacy of the individual or the family
- 5) Parents need to understand special education funding goes to the school's special education program to guarantee that the learning needs of the student are reasonably met.
- 6) **Parents need to have realistic expectations and goals for their child.** Parents need to come to terms with who their child is and what he or she can do. Unrealistic expectations and unattainable standards can be harmful to the self-esteem of even the most intellectually capable child.
- 7) **Parents need to be aware of some basic views about how children learn.** Parents should understand a few key facts about child development so that they can interpret their child's progress. Understanding involves having accurate knowledge about the way children learn.
- 8) **Parents need to become informed about their child's learning needs.** It is important for parents to be aware of the various strategies and classroom modifications/ adaptations that have been put in place to support their child's learning. This information can then be passed on to future teachers in order to make transitions go more smoothly.
- 9) **Parents need to be their child's advocate and teach their child to advocate for him/herself.** Parents need to inform the school about their child's needs and be active in ensuring that their child's learning needs are being met.
- 10) **Parents need to be positive reinforcers.** Parents play a crucial role in encouraging their child's gifts and abilities and in helping their child identify and celebrate these gifts. A child who has learning needs may feel frustrated and discouraged.

Special Needs Education Protocols

Students

Student with Special Needs are an important part of the collaborative process that allows them to be successful. Subsequently, their participation and support in Mountain Christian School's Special Education Program is a vital component of that process.

- 1) All students should be afforded opportunities to learn in environments that are safe and welcoming.
- 2) Students with special needs should have their needs identified in a timely way, have these needs assessed in a comprehensive manner, and receive an appropriate response to those strengths and needs in the delivery of educational programs for them.
- 3) Many students with special needs can contribute to the process of assessment and planning for their own educational programs, and provide an evaluation of the services available to them. At the discretion of the school, students with special needs may or may not be required to be present at I.E.P. development or assessment.
- 4) Students have the responsibility to comply with the school rules authorized by the principal, and with the code of conduct or any other rules and policies established by Mountain Christian School.

Budgeting

The Ministry of Education allocates to the school 100% of the Special Education monies designated to students who qualify for designated special education services. This money is provided 'per student designation' but is used to run a Special Education Program that firstly meets the needs of the specified student, but may also be used assist students who do not qualify for grant monies but require Special Education services to reach their optimism potential. The budget for Special Education shall be separate from the regular education budget, and will take into count:

- 1) The individual needs of all students requiring a modified I.E.P. or a CMP.
 - a. Educational Materials
 - b. Sensory, auditory, speech, and technology equipment.
- 2) Training of staff to help meet such needs.
- 3) Profession Assessments
- 4) The administrative cost of maintaining I.E.P.'s and CMP's.

This budget will be submitted to the school board for approval at the beginning of the fiscal year.

School Completion (Evergreen) Certificate

Background

All students deserve recognition for their educational accomplishments. The Evergreen Certificate recognizes the accomplishments of school completion for students with special needs or other students who have succeeded in meeting the goals and objectives of their Individual Educational Plan (I.E.P.). Mountain Christian School has set criteria for students to receive a Ministry of Education Evergreen Certificate. Some students will receive an Evergreen Certificate instead of a graduation certificate.

Procedures

To be eligible to receive a Ministry of Education issued Evergreen Certificate, students must meet the following criteria:

1. Individual Education Plan
 - 1.1 Completion of the goals and objectives of their Individual Education Plan that includes goals in all of the following areas:
 - 1.1.1 Individualized/Functional Academics.
 - 1.1.2 Life Skills.
 - 1.1.3 Employability Skills.
 - 1.1.4 Transition.
 - 1.1.5 Personal Health.
2. Transition Plan
 - 2.1 Completion of a transition plan modeled on the Ministry defined Transition Plan including:
 - 2.1.1 An outline of options that have been considered for post-secondary and career.
 - 2.1.2 A description of the role of work, leisure, health, family and support networks in building the transition plan.
3. Work Experience/Community Service
 - 3.1 Completion of up to thirty (30) hours of work or volunteer experience.
 - 3.1.1 The experience could be in school, supported work experience in the community or independent work experience
 - 3.1.2 The experience is to be documented with letters of reference as appropriate.
4. Physical Activity
 - 4.1 Completion of up to eighty (80) hours of physical activity in school, home or community:
 - 4.2 The physical activity may be defined as participation in one (1) or more physical activities which could include physiotherapy, community based activities, Special Olympics, adapted or regular Physical Education courses.
5. Enrollment in Grade 12 at Mountain Christian School.