

Sequoia Middle School Inclusion Policy

Goal

Promoting education excellence for all students.

Rationale

The purpose of Sequoia Middle School is to engage every student so that they achieve at the highest possible level of their learning and well-being through quality care and teaching. Among this group of young people will be students with diverse academic needs. While recognizing that all students require different levels of support and encouragement, some may require specialized academic instruction to gain access to and participate in a broad, balanced curriculum.

Philosophy

It is the goal of Sequoia Middle School (SMS) to develop life-long learners. In order to do so, we realize that we need to remove barriers to learning for all students. The structures of SMS are organized to embrace student diversity, which creates the opportunity for enriched learning. Through this emphasis on acceptance of diversity, students will be better equipped to be internationally minded and culturally aware. The inclusion model for students with specialized academic needs increases the instructional outcomes of students with disabilities and students with exceptional learning capabilities by providing equal access to standards-based, core curriculum. This model provides a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support, and problem solving.

Identification

In order to ensure the success of all students at SMS, students with social, emotional, and/or academic difficulties are referred to and reviewed by the Student Success Team (possible members may include School Counselors, Special Education Department Chair, School Psychologist, Assistant Principal, teachers, parents or any other relevant staff member). Any school staff member or parent can submit a referral to school counselors or assistant principals. During the SST review process, students' individual needs are discussed, and a success plan is created. Additionally, students who are identified as advanced or gifted learners will also be appropriately supported in the classroom and on campus.

The specialized academic inclusion model

Students who qualify for special education services will be assigned a case manager and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be created to support the student in the classroom and on campus. Inclusion provides all students equal access to an appropriate curriculum. In order to remove barriers to learning, the inclusion model places students who are eligible for special education services in classes that offer the least restrictive environment based on their goals agreed upon by the IEP team. Special education teachers collaborate and problem-solve with general education teachers utilizing co-teaching, push-in models and consultation to provide the highest quality of differentiated instruction possible. Program flexibility is maintained to meet the ongoing developmental needs of students with IEPs.

Student Success Team Process

All practices and procedures will follow the school's Student Success Team process:

- School staff or parents recognize a concern with a student's academic, behavioral, emotional, or social need.
- Teacher implements classroom interventions.
- If problems or concerns persist: Staff or parents make a referral for SST to the school counselor.
- School counselor gathers information from teachers, and other staff then schedules an SST meeting.
- Counselor coordinates the SST Meeting with other members of the student support team (parents, teachers, learning support, principal, psychologist, etc.)
- Actions implemented by designated staff, as suggested by the SST.
- Implementation of more strategies employed in the classroom and/or recommendation for assessment.
- Parental permission sought and documented; assessments given.
- Review assessment with parents, teachers, and counselors during an IEP meeting.
- Implement appropriate success plan for student (IEP, etc.)
- Follow up and monitor.

Monitoring Student Success

SMS provides direct services to special education students by assigning a case manager to each student. School psychologists, speech therapists, adaptive physical education instructors, occupational and physical therapists, and audiologists provide additional services if they are required.

Special education case managers provide general education teachers with IEP reports to ensure they are aware of specific student learning needs, accommodations, and strategies for success. General education teachers and classroom aides meet with special education case managers to monitor student success and make recommendations.

State and federal mandates for special education supersede some requirements of the Middle Years Program (MYP), however, SMS exercises flexibility in scheduling, and through the inclusion model, all courses are taught using MYP pedagogy and assessed by MYP criteria. SMS offers specialized academic instruction in several content areas when students with identified needs require modified learning environments.

An IEP meeting of the IEP team, including site administrators, special and general education teachers, parents or guardians, and/or the student, is held annually to review individual needs, progress, and appropriate placement.

Differentiation

At SMS we share the philosophy that all students can learn. Through this philosophy, the academic and social-emotional needs of each learner are addressed. Differentiated instructional strategies are determined through data analysis and are implemented in all MYP unit plans. Assignments and assessments are tailored so that all students can access learning. Modifications may include elimination or extension of learning materials. Ongoing professional development and collaborative

planning time during Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and staff meetings will be provided to staff members to ensure that differentiation, and access to least restrictive environments is a focus during teaching, learning, and assessing.

Assessment

Assessment is vital for evaluating teaching and learning. Assessment allows for self-reflection and peer review, which supports all learners in gaining independence and becoming advocates for their own learning. Throughout the MYP unit plans, teachers monitor student understanding with formative and summative assessment tasks. Each task guides the teacher to effectively assess mastery of each individual skill. In PLCs, teachers analyze student progress and reflect on best practices to move towards mastery. All students are assessed with MYP criteria; however, accommodations are made for students with special academic needs.

Conclusion

At SMS, we aim to meet the academic, social, physical, and emotional needs of all students through a variety of resources.