Marietta Sixth Grade Academy International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme

Inclusion Policy

Date(s) revised: February 2019, January 2022, March 2022, February 2026

Mission

Our mission is to ***strive to develop connected, global learners.***

Philosophy

We believe that all learners have unique needs to consider when helping them to meet/exceed their academic and non-academic potential. To provide access to the IB program, the district utilizes approaches and support systems that address the individual needs and varied learning styles of students, including those identified with special needs (Special Education, Gifted, English Learners, students with 504 plans). By recognizing the diversity of our collective learning community, we support the development of life-long learners and internationally minded people.

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

Identification and School Organization

Each school works collaboratively with our district Department of Special Services to identify and serve students' special learning needs. In accordance with state rule 160-4-7-.03 and IDEA regulations, Marietta City Schools (MCS) conducts screening and referral processes to identify children who may have a need for special education or related services. The school has designated leaders who coordinate the processes including problem-solving, success planning, creation of Individual Education Plans, or Individual Accommodation Plans as needed. The local school facilitates screening and referral activities in a variety of ways including the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and referrals made by relevant staff, parents, or students.

Gifted students at MSGA have the opportunity to engage in advanced coursework at each grade level in compliance with the Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.38.

Final identification of students with disabilities and programming for such students occurs only after an appropriate evaluation and a determination of eligibility by a Student Support Team (SST), an interdisciplinary group that uses a systematic process to address learning and/or behavior problems of students in a school in accordance with Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-4-.32. Once it is determined a student is in need of special education and related services, he/she may receive these services up until their 22nd birthday.

The special educational needs inclusion model

Marietta City Schools provides a free, appropriate public education, in the least restrictive environment, to each student with a disability. This includes individualized instruction to meet a student's educational and social needs in an effort to prepare the student for post-secondary education and/or employment and independent living. A full continuum of special education placement and related service options are available. (MCS Department of Special Services and Educational Support, Special Services and Educational Support / Special Services and Educational Support (marietta-city.org)

MSGA students who have special education needs are co-taught with the special and general education teachers collaborating to deliver MYP curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Some students' academic and physical needs require an alternative setting and specialized staff and environments are best for removing barriers to learning. The student is at the center of all decisions with their strengths and challenges considered in empowering them to become lifelong learners that embody the learner profile.

Special Education and General Education teachers are trained in co-teaching and in teaching students with individualized education plans. Special Education teachers engage in regular and frequent professional development organized at the district level.

RESOURCES

Professionals are on staff to provide psychological services, health services, social services, education for the homeless, ESOL instruction, gifted instruction, student support, and services for students with special needs. Counselors are employed at all schools to provide a comprehensive school counseling program to develop mindsets and behaviors around learning strategies, self-management skills, and social skills that lead to success.

Marietta City Schools employs four full-time school psychologists who are skilled practitioners in the areas of psycho-educational assessment, special education procedures, childhood and adolescent development, behavior management, intervention planning, crisis counseling, and consultation. They use their knowledge of psychology, reinforced by familiarity with the latest research regarding school psychological practice, to assess students and intervene in a variety of mental health, developmental, learning, and behavior problems and disabilities. In addition to certification by the Department of Education, one of our school psychologists is licensed by the State Board of Psychology and two are Nationally Certified School Psychologists.

Students with disabilities, English Learners, and students identified as gifted are primarily educated in general education environments with appropriate support and services. Teachers are trained to accommodate learners by differentiating instruction and assessment. Teachers also embed inquiry and problem-solving activities in units to encourage high levels of engagement for all learners. Technology and collaboration are used to better reach all students' learning needs. Teachers engage in the gradual release model of teaching to encourage students to develop independence.

Identified students receive support from teachers with specialized degrees and/or certifications in these areas through small group, team taught, collaborative, or consultative services to address educational goals. When appropriate, regular education and support teachers co-teach to keep learning on target for special needs students and others. This approach allows students to thrive in an inclusive environment. Where self-contained classes are designated to be best for student outcomes, highly qualified teachers and specially designed classrooms are provided.

Appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies are reviewed annually for students with special needs (Special Education, English Learners, and students with 504 plans). In our IB schools, all teachers have access to the IB special needs materials.

MSGA has assistant principals who oversee special education, ESOL, and students with 504s. Our full time on-site Teacher Support Specialist monitors and facilitates the Special Education services in our school. All Special Education teachers have a caseload of students that they monitor for student progress and review their individual education plans.

All buildings at MSGA are fully accessible in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Special Education has an allocated budget for resources in addition to general instructional funding.

CULTURE

The Language, Assessment, and Admissions Policies reflect the following definition of inclusion in their goals and practices:

"*Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers." (The IB guide to inclusive education: a resource for whole school development, 2019)*

The goal of striving to develop the IB Learner Profile attributes in our learners is at the center of actions toward creation of an inclusive culture that supports all students reaching their potential. These ideas are represented in the Inclusive Education Model in Appendix 1.

LEARNING

Planning and Instruction

Collaborative planning for inclusion occurs within the MYP Planning Process for creating units. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are developed by a relevant staff team according to students' background knowledge, experiences, strengths and challenges and discussed with parents for approval. Additionally, universal design for learning strategies are planned and noted on the unit planner to provide opportunities, scaffolds, choices, and entry points for students to meet their learning goals, and to inquire, act, and reflect to understand concepts, develop learner profile dispositions, and practice approaches to learning skills. This allows for all students to have rigorous learning experiences that engage them in inquiry and conceptual learning.

Monitoring student success

Marietta City Schools Department of Special Services Framework for Schools

A Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is used to provide tiered interventions for students at risk for poor school performance due to behavior and/or academics. MTSS begins with progress monitoring and the provision of evidence-based interventions. MTSS is a framework for all students, it occurs in collaboration with school and family. It is an essential component of instructional programming. An MTSS Committee of relevant staff meets monthly to analyze intervention data and make appropriate adjustments to instructional settings and interventions for student growth and success.

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

Differentiation

Our goal is to identify strategies to support all students in being successful, agentic learners. We also implement targeted strategies for students with specific learning and language needs, as well as students that need extensions. Our philosophy in this area is consistent with providing access, engagement, and removing barriers to learning. Differentiated strategies are documented on the MYP, DP, and CP unit plans based upon formal and informal assessment. Differentiated instruction and planning considers the areas of content, process, and products to allow for various levels and points of entry into the curriculum, varied learning engagements, and provide room for student choice.

Assessment

Marietta Sixth Grade Academy

Teachers evaluate students' thinking and understanding throughout the implementation of MYP units using common formative and summative assessment tasks. Assessment *for* learning with MYP criteria from each subject guide is utilized to provide all students opportunities to receive feedback on next steps for greater learning. Data is collected for common assessments and reflected upon by the professional learning communities with disaggregation to monitor the progress and needs of English Language Learners and special needs students. The information further equips teachers to engage students and remove barriers to learning. The process develops students as thinkers, communicators, and inquirers, while also encouraging them to be reflective and knowledgeable.

Inclusion and the IB Learning Profile and Approaches to Learning Skills :

MSGA believes the IB learner profile traits and the approaches to learning (ATL) skills are the foundation to creating an inclusive teaching and learning environment for all. To foster lifelong learning in alignment with our MSGA Mission and Vision, we embrace our diversity and create an inclusive learning environment and positive school culture through the use of the IB learner profile in curriculum and instruction as well as outside the classroom environment. For example, the IB learner profile traits are consistently taught throughout the school and highlighted through daily announcements.. Teachers explicitly teach and model the IB learner profile and ATL skills throughout all of our school experiences, promoting inclusion and honoring the diversity of our learners.

Conclusion

We aim to empower students with affirmation of their identities, support for the growth of a positive self-image, appreciating their prior experiences and knowledge, and by scaffolding and extending learning. These actions are intertwined with inquiry, conceptual learning, and the development of the IB learner profile to provide greater access to opportunities to grow socially, academically, emotionally, and physically.

Documents Used to Update Policy

The IB guide to inclusive education: a resource for whole school development. IBO, 2020
https://resources.ibo.org/ib/works/edu_11162-37963?lang=en
Access and Inclusion Policy. IBO, 2022
Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the IB classroom. CAST Professional Learning, 2016
Research Summary for Universal design for learning (UDL) and inclusive practices in IB World Schools, July 2016
UDL: The UDL Guidelines (cast.org)
Georgia Department of Education Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students
MTSS National Definition Expanded Information Document 07-02-2019.pdf (gadoe.org)

This district policy should be reviewed annually and revised as necessary following the review.