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**Ponce de Leon Middle School**

*International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme*

## Special Education Needs Policy

### **Program Information-**

Ponce de Leon Middle School provides all students with a safe and academically challenging learning environment. We aim to reach a diverse community of learners, setting high expectations for all students. In order to ensure that students with unique needs are challenged and supported, we provide high-quality, evidence-based instruction, with access to resources and support services. Our Special Education Needs Policy acknowledges the need for inclusive practices, while ensuring that every student with exceptional needs is provided the instruction, support, and tools needed to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

### **Identification-**

Ponce de Leon Middle School has established a Student Support Team (SST), consisting of teachers, counselors, social worker, school psychologist, speech/language pathologist, and special education curriculum leader. This team addresses the concerns of parents and educators in regards to the progress and performance of our students. Parents and teachers seek assistance from this team to assess students, determine areas of concern, and eligibility through Special Education or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with federal law and district policy. Student progress is measured through careful analysis of data gathered from a variety of sources, such as formal assessments, district/state achievement tests, report card grades, teacher and parent observations, medical information, and classroom portfolios.

### **Individualized Education Plan-**

If a student is found eligible for services through special education, a team consisting of teachers, evaluation specialists, and the parent develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which is to be implemented throughout the school day. This plan includes statements of present levels of performance, effects of specific needs, necessary accommodations, related services, and goals for instruction. This plan is reviewed regularly by all teachers, and renewed annually.

- *Exceptionalities:* Students are eligible for special education with an IEP in our program with the following exceptionalities.
  - Specific Learning Disabilities
  - Autism
  - Visually Impaired
  - Hearing Impaired
  - Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities
  - Speech/Language Impaired
  - Other Health Impaired
- *Service Delivery:* Ponce de Leon Middle School provides an inclusive education to all students with special education needs within various settings and differing models. Through the consultative model, special education teachers consult with general education teachers to implement the Individualized Education Plan of the students with in a general education setting. In the collaborative model, special education teachers and general education teachers work collaboratively to plan, teach, and assess students with special education needs within a general education setting. These teachers co-teach for the entirety of the assigned academic period. In the resource model, a special education teacher works with students with special education needs in a smaller group setting for part of the day. The special class model provides students with teaching and services from a special education teacher for the entire academic day.

### **Section 504 Plan-**

Students with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities can be found eligible for a Section 504 Plan, which delineates accommodations and services necessary to facilitate equal access to education for the student. The impairments include disorders and conditions affecting one or more of the following areas: psychological, neurological, musculoskeletal, endocrine, cardiovascular, and digestive systems.

## **Accommodations-**

Accommodations offered to students are specified on the students' Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan. These plans describe how, where and by whom the services and accommodations will be provided. Accommodations include adjustments to the way in which students receive information and respond. Changes can be made to the physical environment as well. Accommodations are separated into four categories:

- *Presentation Accommodations*: present content in forms that student with special education needs can understand.
- *Response Accommodations*: allow students to use different ways to complete assignments, tests, and activities.
- *Scheduling Accommodations*: address difficulties related to effort, rate of performance, attention, and the ability to monitor and manage time.
- *Setting Accommodations*: address accessibility issues, behavior management, and problems with organization of space and materials.

## **Strategies in Place-**

Ponce de Leon Middle School faculty ensures that all students, with or without an IEP/504 Plan, receive the support they need to learn and succeed. With a strong set of school-wide best practices, we give students the opportunity to achieve academically and socially, working diligently towards our school mission of developing “inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect”. These best practices include the following strategies:

- Implementing Differentiated Instruction.
- Using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) when planning lessons and activities for all students.
- Interactive web-based intervention programs for students in reading and mathematics are offered to all students who experience difficulty in these areas.
- Professional development is offered to all teachers and support staff regularly throughout the academic year.
- Teachers establish relevancy and purpose for learning by relating lessons to real-world experiences.
- Teachers shape approximations of desired behavior by providing praise, verbal encouragement, one-to-one conversation, or immediate feedback for correct answers.
- Teachers and support staff reduce distractions, increase reinforcements and provide interactive tasks to engage all learners.
- Teachers encourage use of agendas and timelines to teach organizational skills needed for academic success.