



ADA MERRITT K-8 CENTER MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME INCLUSION POLICY



Program Information

Ada Merritt K-8 Center provides a challenging and nurturing academic environment to a diverse student population. Most of our students enter the program in Kindergarten by random selection. Therefore, our student population mirrors the school district population. Students admitted in grades 2-8 must meet a minimum 2.0 grade point average and take a test in their chosen world language. We appreciate the differing instructional needs of our students and have incorporated strategies to address students' special needs within our International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. All students participate in the IB program. Those with special needs receive additional or differentiated instruction. In order to ensure that each learner receives the appropriate support needed to benefit fully from all the provided learning opportunities, teachers differentiate instruction and provide a variety of activities and resources that accommodate learners at all levels of skill and knowledge. Assessment is diverse and relevant, focusing on real-world tasks and encouraging self-reflection and recognition of personal growth.

We are committed to working with parents, educational specialists, teachers, and student services staff to ensure that all students reach their maximum potential, regardless of exceptionality or medical condition. Examples of special educational needs include:

- specific learning disabilities
- hearing and/or language impairment
- behavior/emotional disorders
- attention disorders
- medical conditions such as diabetes, severe allergies, and heart problems
- mental health conditions
- autism.

Ada Merritt K-8 Center offers an inclusive education for students with special needs, with a consultative model for special education services in which the special education teacher consults and collaborates with the general education teacher to monitor the implementation of special education services.

Identifying Student Needs

Parents or school personnel may request an evaluation that may lead to a child being identified as a student with special needs and services in school.

The evaluation procedures include ongoing assessments of the child's response to instruction and interventions, interviews, observations, the analysis of this information, and sometimes individual tests administered by a school psychologist or a speech/language pathologist. Once the team decides that it has enough data to determine whether the child is eligible for exceptional student education (ESE), the evaluation procedures are complete.

If a child is not eligible for ESE services, the team will continue to work with him/her to identify and implement effective instruction and interventions. The team's problem-solving process continues in an ongoing effort to improve and maintain an effective education for every child.



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Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

If the child is eligible for ESE services, an individual educational plan (IEP) is developed to address the child's specific needs. Depending on the IEP, these special educational services may include individual or small group instruction; teaching modifications; and/or physical, occupational and speech therapy. The parent or guardian must give consent for services before the IEP can be implemented.

The school communicates with parents on a quarterly basis regarding the child's progress on each of the goals that were developed at the last IEP meeting. The quarterly status report on goals reflects one of the following: mastery of the goal, adequate progress made, some progress made, or insufficient progress made.

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention is a process where the school uses student assessment data to make sure that all students are progressing in both academics and behavior. Multiple tiers (or levels of intensity) of both academic and behavioral supports are made available to groups or individual students based on data that the school collects on a regular basis. Some students who need the most intensive level of support may be referred for possible eligibility determination for special education.

Section 504 Procedures for Students with Disabilities

Students who have been diagnosed with one or more conditions affecting major life activities such as caring for one's self, seeing, breathing, walking, hearing, speaking, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and performing manual tasks, may qualify for a Section 504 Plan for Students with Disabilities. The procedures for initiating special educational services are as follows:

- Student is referred to the School Support Team (SST), or, in the case of students with obvious physical or health needs that require accommodations, directly to the 504 team.
- If the SST determines it is appropriate to refer for 504 services, a Section 504 team consisting of a person who knows of the documented disability, a person who knows the student, and a person who knows of accommodations, convene to write the initial Section 504 plan. Parents and students are encouraged to attend the meeting and provide input that would help the team in making decisions.

Section 504 teams convene for annual or interim meetings to review and, if necessary, revise, the plan. Section 504 requires that reevaluations occur every three years, before any significant change in placement, or at the request of the parents or school personnel. Section 504 evaluation means reviewing information from a variety of sources, such as teacher observations, standardized test scores, report cards, and information from parents and medical providers, to gauge the effectiveness of the plan in meeting the student's educational needs.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that protects the rights of students with disabilities and provides additional support and assistance in special education



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services. These rights, or procedural safeguards, are intended to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be a partner in educational decisions.

What are some expectations of our program?

- Work collaboratively with faculty and families in order to ensure student success.
- Respect and acknowledge students' strengths and progress towards their specific learning needs.

Who is responsible for inclusion in our school?

Inclusion is a responsibility shared by all stakeholders at the school. Teachers collaborate among themselves and with parents to identify and support students to special needs. The school counselor and assistant principal collaborate to meet and document all district requirements.

What are some strategies of our program?

- engaging students in small group interventions
- providing positive reinforcement, praise, and re-direction to encourage students to increase their social skills and self-esteem
- differentiating instructional styles
- providing support and clarity on classroom expectations and behavioral objectives
- dividing long-term assignments into small increments
- using manipulatives (games, computer-based interventions) during group interventions
- encouraging peer mentoring during classroom activities
- engaging students in classroom discussions while developing strategies that work on clarifying their needs and communication skills
- providing tasks that allow for divergent production
- providing tutoring sessions and web-based programs for students who need support and reinforcement in reading and mathematics
- providing small group setting for testing
- providing additional time for testing.

What are current learning needs at the school?

The majority of our special needs students fall in 2 categories:

- Students who are identified as “gifted”: they participate in a “gifted” Design class. The Design class is project based, which allows the teacher to align the students gifted objectives with those of the project.
- Students with an IEP or 504 plan: they receive differentiated support based on their identified needs and specific plan.

Inclusion Policy Review

The Ada Merritt K-8 Center Inclusion Policy is reviewed yearly by teachers, counselor and administrators to reflect any identified need for change. It is shared with the school community on the MYP page of the school website at <http://adamerritt.dadeschools.net>.