



*“Educating Today’s Children for Tomorrow’s World”*



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## **Inclusion Policy**

Our motto at Morikami Park Elementary School (MPES) is, “Educating today’s children for tomorrow’s world.” Administrators, faculty, parents, and students work together to develop students who are responsible, respectful, and caring citizens who are lifelong learners dedicated to success within a global society. The purpose of this policy is to describe how we provide seamless instruction to individual students with special needs by providing a continuum of support services within the least restrictive environment.

### **DETERMINING THE LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:**

Students who attend Morikami Park Elementary School (MPES) come to us from an assortment of cultures, backgrounds, interests, and abilities. Some students enroll in MPES with eligibility for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Those students immediately receive their services from the appropriate support staff based on their identified needs. ESE teachers work collaboratively with the homeroom teacher(s) to meet academic, independent functioning, social/emotional, and communication IEP goals. MPES is an inclusive school, therefore these services take place within the students’ general education English Language Arts (ELA) and math classes. Students with speech and/or language eligibilities receive their ESE services from a speech-language pathologist (SLP) within a resource room. Students are grouped according to their assigned grade and area of need.

All MPES students receive Tier 1 (general education) services from their homeroom teacher(s). Students are closely monitored as standards are presented and assessed. Students who need additional support in ELA, math, independent functioning, social/emotional skills receive iii (Immediate Intensive Intervention) as soon as a gap in learning is noted. If the student is not able to close the gap in learning, a detailed referral describing the area of concern, including data to support the concern, is made to the School Based Team (SBT) and the student then enters the Multi-Tiered Support System Process (MTSS). The SBT includes administrators, support staff (ESE teacher, reading specialist, school psychologist, school counselor, behavioral health professional, ESOL teacher, speech-language pathologist) and the referring teacher(s). A variety of formal and informal assessments are used to create a picture of the whole child. The team discusses the area of need and selects the best research-based intervention and data collection method to assess progress. A student receives this formal, data driven instruction from a teacher on his/her grade level during the allocated iii time. This level of supplemental instruction/intervention is referred to as Tier 2. The SBT reconvenes after 8-12 weeks to discuss progress. If progress has been made and there is no longer a learning gap, the student can be returned to Tier 1 instruction. If progress has been made, yet there is still a learning gap, the

team may decide to continue with Tier 2 instruction. If the student continues to struggle (little to no progress has been made), the team will consider adding additional 30 minutes of intervention addressing the same area of need. This level of intensive instruction/intervention is referred to as Tier 3 and is provided by specially trained professionals (ex. reading specialist, school counselor). Parents are part of the team and are informed throughout this process.

If a student continues to struggle, the SBT may refer the student to the Child Study Team (CST). The CST includes but is not limited to parents, ESE teachers, classroom teachers, reading specialist, school psychologist, school counselor, behavioral health professional, ESOL teacher, SLP, occupational and physical therapists. They will determine if there is a need for formalized testing for the purpose of ascertaining the presence of a disability that may be negatively impacting the student's ability to close the gap in the area of concern. The CST reconvenes after testing is completed to determine eligibility for special education as per the state of Florida's laws.

Special Education is considered when:

- 1) The student has one or more significant academic skill deficit(s) as compared to age or grade- level benchmarks/standards.
- 2) The student is making insufficient progress in response to scientific, research-based intervention.
- 3) The student's learning difficulties are not PRIMARILY the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; intellectual disability; significant identifiable emotional disability; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES IN GRADES KINDERGARTEN THROUGH FIFTH GRADE**

Once it has been determined that a student requires support from a special educator, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed by the CST. These plans reflect the student's individual needs and are guided by Federal Laws. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a piece of American legislation that ensures students with a disability are provided with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is tailored to their individual needs as reflected in the IEP. The goal of IDEA is to provide children with disabilities the same opportunity for education as those students who do not have a disability. At MPES, this goal is reached using a continuum of support facilitation based on individual student needs. Most students requiring special education services receive support facilitation in the general education classroom. These students receive specialized instruction and accommodations for learning and assessments. Student information is considered confidential and access to student files is limited to only those working with the student. Student progress is regularly reviewed and services are adjusted accordingly. Classroom teachers are also supported by the special education staff to ensure that barriers to success are minimized. For example, classroom teachers and specialists work together in developing methods of differentiating content, process, and product. Professional development is regularly provided to staff to guarantee that students succeed in their general education classes.

### **PARENT RIGHTS:**

Parents have the opportunity to be an educational partner in the educational decisions made regarding their child. The document titled "Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Parents of Students with Disabilities" describes in depth a parent's rights that go along with programs for students with disabilities. These rights include written notification of any actions determined necessary, parental consent required for any actions, revocation of parental consent, confidentiality and access to student information, as well

as mediation and state complaint procedures.

### **COMMUNICATION OF THIS POLICY:**

The full policy will be made available to staff and faculty and will be part of the orientation at the start of each academic year. Morikami recognizes that teachers new to the school and IB Programmes may require additional knowledge when teaching students with special needs, such as:

- Information about factors that affect a student's learning, particularly with regard to inquiry-based learning
- How to differentiate and match teaching to students needs as they access the curriculum
- Knowledge of assistive technology
- An awareness of the support systems and personnel available at MPES

Students may also receive accommodations and modifications to learning environments, tasks, and assessments if they meet the criterion set forth by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is designed to protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities. The intent of the law is to prevent any form of discrimination based on disabilities. The determination of whether a student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity must be made on an individual basis. Students must have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities or bodily functions; have a record of such impairment; or be regarded as having such an impairment. If eligible, the team (see SBT list) will create a 504 plan for the student which will include accommodations and/or modifications that will provide the student with the same access to education as other students without disabilities in the general education setting. Accommodations may include items such as preferential seating, modified assignments, or behavior plans to name a few. Examples of modifications may be setting up classrooms for wheelchair access or adjusting the brightness of lighting. Like IEPs, 504 Plans must be reviewed and updated annually.

### **Committee Members:**

Kathryn Claussen- Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI) Teacher

Kim DiLorenzo- Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

Sara Goldberg- Guidance Counselor

Amy Mercier- IB Coordinator

Tracy Nixon- Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Teacher

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