

## **Special Needs Policy**

Silver Spring International Middle School

*“Empowering the Leader in each Learner”*

The Silver Spring International Middle School inspires and empowers internationally minded lifelong learners by acknowledging our common humanity, as students become leaders in the global society. We believe that all students have learning needs that must be acknowledged and cultivated. Silver Spring International Middle School is committed to creating an environment that promotes acceptance and tolerance. We believe in developing the whole learner and know that educating our special needs students requires the collaboration and support of all stakeholders in the community. We are a diverse community with many skills and talents and share the common belief that with scaffolding, differentiation, and authentic learning experiences, all students will be able to access the learning goals of the IB Program. Collaborative planning and teaching play an integral role in providing equitable access for our special needs students. We hold all students to high standards. Our current schedule facilitates common planning time to collaboratively plan in our professional learning committees alongside the special needs educators and in some cases paraeducators.

### **Ways we support our Special Needs Students**

We evaluate the individual needs of the students and schedule them in their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Our goal is to have 100% of our special needs students participate in a comprehensive middle school experience in the LRE. To better support the social learning, we intentionally create a setting for students to interact with their grade level peers (lunch, classes, and special events). Annual training based on student need is given to staff who need support on how to handle special situations as they arise. During Autism Awareness Month, staff members deliver content on what it means to teach (autistic) students at our school.

### **Practices at Silver Spring International Middle School for Students with Special Needs**

Silver Spring International Middle School follows the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) guidelines below for serving students with special needs:

- Utilizing guidelines described in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), P.L. 101-476 to identify students eligible for special education services.
- Monitoring all teachers to follow state regulations regarding compliance with IDEA.
- Requiring all teachers to implement accommodations for students as stated on the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This is done in a two step process: the case manager oversees the development and implementation of the IEP. Classroom teachers

support students daily through the implementation of IEP goals, objectives, accommodations, and supplementary.

- Continual monitoring and collection of data to inform instructional practices and adjustments to promote student attainment of academic concepts.
- On-going communication between student's support team (i.e. case manager, teachers, parents, counselors, administrator, and para educators).
- RTSE collaborating with special education teachers to provide professional development to general educators on differentiation and hands-on training of resources available that address (instruction), accommodations, and modifications.
- RTSE managing the administration of the IEP process and attends content and team meetings to present relevant information.
- Using technology to support the learning needs of students.
- Providing students access to the MCPS curriculum and common core in the least restrictive environment.
- Regularly scheduled collaborative planning between highly-qualified special education teacher and highly-qualified general education teacher to ensure scaffolding, differentiation, and authentic learning experiences.
- Co-teaching between a highly-qualified special education teacher and highly-qualified general education teacher as outlined on the student's IEP.
- Supported classrooms where paraeducators provide support to special education students within the general education environment.
- Self-Contained classes where students with IEP's are grouped together to provide direct instruction by a special education teacher.
- Annual Reviews are conducted once a year to update student's' IEP (specifically looking at goals, accommodations, supplementary aids, and current academic levels)
- Periodic Reviews are conducted when parents or teachers ask for reviews based on student performance and need.
- Focussing on the Approaches to Learning Skill Category of Communication and embedding specific communication skill strategies in daily lessons in order to increase peer interactions, develop writing skills and strengthen core literacy practices.