



SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

This policy should be read with the following IB publications: “Special Educational Needs within the IB Programmes,” 2010, and “Candidates with Assessment Access Requirements,” 2014

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Purpose

The objective of this policy is to detail the principles, beliefs and practices that we use to support learning for students with special needs. It reinforces our status as an IB candidate school in Panama, adhering to the tenets of the Ministry of Education and the International Baccalaureate Organization.

Philosophy

At Boston School International, we believe that all children can learn. We ensure that the school has the necessary resources to provide education to each of our students. This policy supports the teaching-learning process reiterating the commitment the school has to society by promoting a vision of tolerance and inclusion in all aspects of life as world citizens.

Panamanian Ministry of Education and IBO Mandates

The BSI Learning Support Program complies with Panamanian law. All learning Support Policies must adhere to the guidelines specified in the 2011 Procedural Manual, Regulation of Executive Decree No. 1 of 4 February 2000 "whereby the Regulations for inclusive education of the population with special educational needs (SEN) is established."

The IB publication "Special Educational Needs within the IB Programmes" (2010) says, "inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers."

Differentiation

The process of teaching and learning begins with the premise that not all students are alike. Based on the readiness, learning preferences, and interests of students, teachers vary their approach and adjust the curriculum and the presentation of materials to give students access to multiple paths to the same goals or outcomes. The Learning Support Department works with teachers to support efforts to differentiate their classrooms and match teaching approaches to students' needs.

Individual Education Plans (IEP)

When a student's learning needs are identified as potentially beyond the scope of typical classroom differentiation practices and strategies, the school may require that an evaluation be performed by a certified professional. IEPs take into account the needs of each student, respecting his/her pace and learning style. Individual Education Plans are only created when students experience difficulties in the school in conjunction with a diagnosis by a medical practitioner. When such evaluations indicate specific accommodations that are possible with



school resources, an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is established according to specific procedures (see below). The IEP is attached to the student file and shared with teachers.

IEP creation procedures

When concerns regarding a student's learning are raised, the Learning Support Department takes these steps:

1. Gather information: grades, assessments, tests (MAP results when available), teacher comments
2. Consider the information and possible draft of an IEP
3. Call an Individual Education Plan Meeting to collaborate in the possible creation of an Individual Education Plan. This meeting may include the Student, Parents, Learning Support Department, Counselor, Principal and any other stakeholder.
4. Create an Individual Education Plan:
 - Discuss strengths and difficulties
 - Examine diagnosis and recommendations
 - Review data collected
 - Agree upon goals
 - Delegate responsibilities
 - Consider implications for graduation and further study
 - Establish progress monitoring schedule

Progress Monitoring

The purpose of Progress Monitoring is to evaluate the effectiveness of an action plan. Every Individualized Plan will specify the regularity of progress monitoring. Information must be collected at this time to determine the progress students have made toward goals. If goals have been met or other needs emerge, it may be necessary to alter students' action plans.

Students' progress will be measured at the end of each trimester by comparing his/her performance to the specified goals. The classroom teacher and Learning Support teacher will be involved. Based on this information, instructional decisions will be made.

Modified Grading

It may be determined by the IEP team that a student requires modifications in regards to assessments and grading. The rationale for modified grading can be found in Article 17, of the 2011 Procedural Manual (MEDUCA), Regulation of Executive Decree No. 1 of February 4, 2002, which states "the criteria for the learning assessments of students who required curriculum accommodations, will be defined according to the objectives or contents for each individual case".



IEPs may include the following:

Access Accommodation

This refers to adaptation of resources (material, physical spaces, communication, etc.) aimed at students with SEN especially those with motor, visual and auditory deficiency, to facilitate their access to the curriculum.

Accommodation strategies

These are specific actions performed by educators to provide appropriate learning situations that respond to the specific learning needs of the student. Objectives are identified and prioritized, addressing areas of content, methodology, didactic organization, timing, and assessment/evaluation processes. They are determined according to student needs, but without modification.

Modification

Modification is the elimination of some objectives in some subjects/areas of the curriculum. Therefore the evaluation criteria are modified. *School resources are not used to prepare and deliver modified curriculum.* If a medical assessment prescribes modifications to the school program, the school works with the family for them to engage teaching/tutoring to accomplish the modification. IEP creation procedures include guidance regarding the consequences of modification in terms of graduation, diploma options, and post-secondary study choices.

School Admissions Process and Special Educational Needs

The school considers admissions documentation (transcripts etc.) and administers its own diagnostic evaluation in order to decide on a student's admissibility. The process takes into account the resources necessary and available to meet student learning needs, to include:

- trained teachers
- academic programs
- educational resources
- materials and infrastructure

Considerations:

- If the admission process reveals an educational need of an applicant that the school has the capacity and resources to address, specific agreements will be made with family (and therapist(s)) as to the responsibilities and procedures of each, with the objective that the student be able to successfully complete the school program.
- If the evaluation process determines that the educational needs of the applicant outweigh the current educational psychology resources or school infrastructure resources, the school notifies the family that the applicant may not be admitted.

- Admission to the school for any student with identified special learning needs requires that parents sign the school contract which includes their commitment to ensure support requirements, e.g. specialist evaluation and/or therapy, tutoring, etc. as well as any commitment necessary to provide individual additional resources that are required to meet learning needs.
- If after the initial evaluation by the school or during the course of school thereafter a need is detected for specific support by a specialist, inside or outside the school, the Learning Support department notifies parents and works with them to assure it. If the school resources and/or expertise cannot provide this support, it must be assumed by the parents.
- All detected cases with special educational needs are monitored by teachers, coordinators and specialists regarding challenges found in the process to generate or redefine functional support (accommodations). The whole process is reported to parents through meetings and reports during the school year.
- The school will establish agreements with parents and specialists in order to differentiate the teaching-learning process and assessment of students with special educational needs. In many cases the assessment will be applied differently from the rest of the group. Agreements are confidential and individual and cannot be compared with each other.

IB Diploma Programme Admissions and Special Learning Needs

The Diploma Programme is accessible for most students (see [Admissions Policy](#) for additional details). Students with documented special learning needs (including a professional assessment of less than two years old) and an IEP are eligible to apply for “Special Arrangements” which may be granted by the IBO. This said, all students share the assessment objectives that are a part of all subject guides; *modification is not an option*.

BSI follows Section 4 of the IBO Candidates with Assessment Access Requirements 2014 which requires that any application for Special Arrangements be submitted to the IBO, via the Diploma Coordinator, by May 1st of 11th grade.

Possible Special Arrangements include:

- Separate room/venue and proctor for testing
- 25-50% additional time
- Exam breaks
- Computer assisted writing, speech transcription if student uses this in school
- Scribe, Reader, Communicator, Prompter
- Audio recordings of exam papers
- Large print, Braille, etc. exam modification
- Deadline extension
- Practical/lab work assistance



- Exemption from an exam component that a candidate cannot perform physically

Responsibilities of stakeholder to help meet special education needs

Student responsibilities

- Know and accept thyself!- with the help, feedback and input of parents, teachers, and specialists, never stop learning about themselves--their strengths, their weaknesses, and their needs
- Understand that special learning needs do not make them better or worse students, just different
- Appreciate that special learning needs may make their learning experiences different, but different is not bad
- Stay positive!- recognize that special learning needs may require extra or different efforts and strategies, *and that they will benefit in the long run from their hard work to learn*
- Attend and collaborate where possible in meetings to support their learning needs
- Understand the objectives, means and methods of their IEP
- Be proactive and assertive about addressing their learning needs

Learning Support Department Responsibilities

- Follow admissions and/or IEP procedures regarding communication, planning, and intervention in order to confirm, articulate, and assure the school's response to student special learning needs
- Guide and collaborate with teachers and coordinators to accommodate for individual SEN students in the classroom (techniques, methodologies and didactic material) according to IEPs
- Offer general support and guidance for differentiation in classrooms by teachers
- Collaborate in the development of resources and teaching materials
- Observe classrooms to assess how student needs are being met
- Monitor and consult cases of students with SEN
- Guide and communicate with the SEN student parents or guardians about their roles and responsibilities in the process of educational inclusion
- Do systematic evaluation with the classroom teacher on SEN student progress and challenges
- Reassess students with SEN to adapt accommodations as needed
- Communicate regularly with external specialists on achievements, progress and challenges of students with SEN
- Document the above on a consistent basis
- Coordinate training programs for school staff
- Raise awareness among classmates, parents or guardians of students with SEN on the acceptance and support of these peers in the classroom
- Maintain confidentiality and discretion regarding student special learning needs



Teacher Responsibilities

- Facilitate the integration of SEN students to class and whole school dynamics
- Contribute to the personalization of teaching and learning processes through differentiation techniques and practices
- Monitor student learning to identify student learning difficulties and possible special needs
- Communicate and collaborate with the Learning Support Department in order to address all student learning needs
- Promote the development of acceptance and participation of peers with special educational needs in the school environment
- Coordinate, develop, and deliver curricular accommodations indicated by IEPs with the support of specialized teachers, *using as a reference*:
 - The teaching unit
 - Daily or weekly plans
 - The educational needs of each student
- Maintain confidentiality and discretion regarding student special learning needs

IB Coordinator Responsibilities

- Collaborate with students, coordinators, teachers, school administrators, and parents in the support of students with special learning needs
- Guide student placement in the Diploma Programme
- Maintain confidentiality and discretion regarding student special learning needs

Parent Responsibilities

Meet obligations as detailed in the school contract, and:

- Maintain consistent, responsive communication with teachers, school specialists and coordinators, so that they know the processes of teaching and learning in which their children are involved and participate in decisions as necessary
- Be actively involved in the educational process of their child, in accordance with the guidelines established by the learning support department
- Attend to and monitor the guidance and suggestions of the school, such as:
 - Perform neurological, psychological, psychoeducational, or other evaluations that the school requests
 - Bring together a team of specialists to collaborate in an interdisciplinary way with the school to help adapt the curriculum to their child's needs
 - Provide materials, didactic and specialized resources required for the student
 - Attend the therapies and/or extracurricular activities indicated by specialists



References

2011 Procedural Manual, Regulation of Executive Decree No. 1, MEDUCA, 4 February 2000

“Special Educational Needs within the IB Programmes,” IBO, 2010

“Candidates with Assessment Access Requirements,” IBO, 2014

Inclusion/special educational needs policy in the IB Diploma Programme of Karinthy Frigyes Gimnázium

Prince Andrew HS, Nova Scotia, Canada, Special Educational Needs Policy