

LEARNING DIFFERENCES POLICY

PURPOSE

- To establish a common and shared understanding of how the Melbourne Montessori Learning Differences Program will function
- To define the roles of all involved
- To formulate the guidelines of how a student is included on the program

SCOPE

At Melbourne Montessori School ('MMS') we aim to have a cohesive and inclusive approach to specific learning needs children that is implemented by the Principal, the Learning Differences Coordinator, the staff, the parents and external professionals as required. The program will be based around flexibility allowing us to follow the needs of each child. We recognize that each child has a unique way of learning and particular needs. The Montessori materials, other appropriate equipment and specific programs will be used to meet the student's needs in order for them to reach their full potential.

1. Learning Differences Coordinator
2. Teachers and Assistants
3. Parents

PROCEDURES

1. LEARNING DIFFERENCES COORDINATOR is responsible for:

- 1.1 the task of overseeing the Learning Differences Program and setting and overseeing the work of the integration aides;
- 1.2 liaising with the Principal, classroom teachers and specialist staff on a regular basis;
- 1.3 providing and being involved in, informal meetings such as before school, after school and lunch time 'catch-ups' to share information and give advice about the students to parents and staff;
- 1.4 organising formal meetings as needed with parents and, where appropriate, include the Principal, staff members and external professionals;
- 1.5 maintaining accurate and up-to-date records of all students on the program;
- 1.6 making sure all information, meetings and reports about a student on the program are treated in the strictest confidence;
- 1.7 the program which will cover three main areas:
 - Literacy and Mathematics for those students with a diagnosis which indicates the need for support, or students who are working one year or more below their chronological age
 - ESL to support the student to communicate and operate in the classroom
 - Social skills for students who experiencing grief, bullying, low self-esteem or difficulties with interacting socially.

2. TEACHERS AND ASSISTANTS are responsible for:

- 2.1 working collaboratively with the Learning Differences Coordinator;
- 2.2 sharing their understanding of the student's strengths and requirements in relation to the program;
- 2.3 actively participating in the decision making process and helping set individual goals for the student;
- 2.4 attending meetings and reporting in a timely manner any incident or disclosure to the Specific Needs Coordinator.

3. PARENTS are responsible for:

- 3.1 providing information which will facilitate their child's development;

- 3.2 providing the School with all relevant documentation relating to their child including reports they may have from external professionals (for example psychologists);
- 3.3 actively participating in the decision making process and helping set individual goals for their child;
- 3.4 seeking a professional assessment for their child professionally if it is requested by the School.

ENTRY TO THE PROGRAM

The Learning Differences program at MMS has three different focus areas therefore there are a number of different ways a student may come to be on the program.

Teachers will need to complete the Learning Differences Information form at the end of each term, which details that the student is performing significantly below their peers in specific areas. Teachers will be asked to make their recommendations for a student to receive LDU support at the end of each term. Once accepted as having significant learning needs requiring additional one-on-one support, the student will be added to the timetable for the following term. When the LDU timetable has been finalised it will remain unchanged for the following term.

Learning - A student may be referred to LDU for support with their learning, particularly in Literacy and Mathematics.

This process involves:

Teacher observations, data collection and anecdotal notes.

- The teacher meeting with LDU to express their concerns.
- Professional observations by LDU.
- The teacher and LDU meeting with the student's parents to discuss their concerns.
- Agreement by all involved with the student that additional support is necessary for the student to make progress.

Learning support may be necessary if a student has significant difficulty with **fine or gross motor skills** that are seen to be severely impacting learning across all areas. Following meetings with parents/caregivers this child would be referred to an Occupational Therapist for assessment and/or intervention.

Learning support may be deemed necessary for a student with significant speech problems or articulation issues that have a significant impact on their learning. A meeting with parents would be followed by a recommendation for a Speech Pathologist's assessment and/or intervention.

Students would also be included for learning support if their assessment results for reading or spelling are more than one year behind their chronological age on the SWST or the South Australian Spelling Test. Criteria for Cycle One students will be based on testing results and professional judgement by LDU on an individual basis.

ESL - A student will be included in the ESL program if they are having significant difficulties with English because it is not their first language. These difficulties will be defined by data gathered by teachers or professional observations by the Learning Differences teachers.

Social Skills - A student will be included in the Social Skills program if the Principal, Learning Differences Coordinator, classroom teacher or parent assesses that their challenging social skills could be supported in such a group. They will also participate if they are experiencing grief, bullying, low self-esteem or significant difficulties with interacting socially. Social Skills groups will of necessity be small and comprised of students with like needs. Groups may vary from term to term.

EXIT FROM THE PROGRAM

A student will no longer stay on the Learning Differences Program:

- If their test results indicate they have attained their chronological age in Literacy and Mathematics.
- If a student with ESL is recognized as coping in the classroom, and this decision is supported with evidence, i.e. the teachers test data and LDU observation.
- If socially they have become competent and no longer require extra assistance

REVIEWED: 2017

LINKED WITH:

Health and Wellbeing Policy
Planning Policy
Curriculum Organisation Policy
Student Assessment and Reporting Policy