



**Lanier Middle School**

**“An International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme School”**

## **Lanier Special Education and Inclusion Policy**

### **General Introduction**

The goal of HISD's special education department is to support students with disabilities in gaining college and career readiness skills through active engagement in grade level curriculum. The ARD/IEP Services division of the Houston Independent School District's (HISD) Office of Special Education Services provides a variety of supports and services for parents, students, community, and district personnel. The ARD/IEP Services staff provides related services, instructional services, and individualized educational program (IEP) supports and services in the schools, district, community, and homes. These supports and services include preparing ARD/IEP committee members to actively participate in the admission, review, dismissal/individualized education program (ARD/IEP) process. Technology development and application, parent and personnel training, product demonstrations, and connecting schools and families to community resources are just a few of the many supports and services provided by the ARD/IEP Services team. Funding for all services are provided by the district to ensure all students needs are met.

### **Special Education at Lanier**

Lanier Middle School has a continuum of services designed to meet the needs of individual learners. Services range from case managers monitoring mainstreamed students to self-contained classes, where the students spend more than 50% of the day in special education classes.

H.I.S.D. believes in inclusion. Special education and general education teachers are given training and support to ensure students can and do learn at Lanier. Individual Education Programs (IEPs) are developed to meet the specific needs of each special education student.

### **Special Education Models and Services Utilized**

Our school utilizes the following instructional services and supports in order to meet the needs of our Special Education students:

#### **Case Manager Assistance**

A variety of services are offered to special education students. Each student is assigned a Special Education Case Manager. These professionals have multifaceted roles with a focus on co-teaching, in-class support and collaborating with their students' general education teachers. Case managers are responsible for conducting annual ARDs, developing new IEPs, and monitoring student progress.

#### **Speech Therapy Services**

Students who have been evaluated for speech therapy receive specific assistance as documented in IEPs and modifications. A speech therapist is available to evaluate, monitor and provide direct and indirect services to identified students.

## **Resource Classes**

There are resource classes for students identified through the ARD committee who need intensive small group instruction in the areas of Reading and/or Math. Resource teachers also help develop IEPs so that students are able to master the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Students will receive less than 20% of instruction in resource classes. Our staff is knowledgeable and receives specific content area training annually.

## **Skills for Learning and Living**

Students identified by the ARD committee with disabilities that affect their cognitive ability are given assistance so they can learn in functional environments. Students are taught skills necessary for daily living. Students are actively engaged in the community. Students spend over 50% of the day in specialized classes, and participate with peers during curricular and extracurricular activities. Students are taught using the unique IB framework to support their leveled-multidisciplinary curriculum.

## **Structured Learning Class**

The structured learning environment is designed for students identified with autism who benefit from additional support in practicing social skills that enable them to meet the challenges of the general education classroom. Structured teaching utilizes visual cues which help students with autism focus on the relevant information which can, at times, be difficult for the person with autism to distinguish from the non-relevant information.

## **Our Principles of Practice with Special Education Students**

We have incorporated within our special education practices the four principles of good practice identified by the International Baccalaureate that promote equal access for all learners across the curriculum. We recognize that these principles are based on elements of good practice that are essential to the development of the whole person.

### **1. Affirming Identity and Building Self Esteem**

First and foremost, we have chosen to utilize the development of the Learner Profile attributes in our regular advocacy class meetings. These classes are inclusive of our entire student population which helps develop a sense of camaraderie among the whole student body. During class time, students are encouraged to explore the various attributes and strive to identify with one or more of them. Students who exhibit particular strengths of a Learner Profile attribute are recognized by the campus as a whole.

### **2. Valuing Prior Knowledge**

We recognize that it cannot be assumed that those learners who have diverse learning needs will necessarily all share the same previous learning and background knowledge. If new information is to be understood, it must be linked to prior knowledge. All teachers on our campus activate prior knowledge through the use of either formal pre-assessment or questioning strategies. In addition, our teachers engage in a process of regular collaborative planning in order to consider and develop the strategies necessary for activating and building up background knowledge when planning units of study.

### **3. Scaffolding**

Scaffolding provides a concrete context for understanding. Our teachers use the following strategies to foster learners' increasing independence:

- Visual aids
- Demonstrations

*Lanier Middle School, 2600 Woodhead, Houston Texas 77098 Phone 713-942-1900*

- Collaborative groups

#### **4. Extended Learning**

Students receive multisensory instruction that is explicit, direct, cumulative, intensive, and focused on the structure of language. Multisensory learning involves the simultaneous use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile pathways to enhance memory and learning of written language.

Ultimately, it is our goal to foster learners' increasing independence in taking responsibility for developing strategies for their own learning.

#### **Follow Up**

At the beginning of the school year, the Special Education Department provides folders that contain IEPs of special education students currently enrolled in each teacher's classes. The folder contains accommodations and testing information specific to the student. The case managers meet with teachers individually to answer questions regarding specific students.

The Case Manager concept ensures that students do not "fall through the cracks". Case managers enable Lanier to have a co-teaching/in-class support inclusion model. The special education and general education teachers collaborate in order to meet the needs of our students. The case manager tracks students' progress on their IEP goals.

The administrator over the special education department arranges and presides at ARD meetings for each identified student. Prior to the ARD, a teacher from the student's cluster will be designated by the cluster leader or team, to:

- Gather pertinent information from the student's teachers
- Attend the ARD as representative of the team

In the event that a student is not making adequate progress academically or behaviorally after interventions have been provided to the student, teachers may refer the student to the Intervention and Assistance Team. The first step teachers take in the referral process is to discuss the child with the grade level team members. Next, teachers discuss the issue with the IAT liaison. Finally, teachers are asked to attend an IAT meeting.