



# Rockridge Secondary School Special Education Policy

*[B]ecoming more inclusive is a matter of thinking and talking, reviewing and refining practice, and making attempts to develop a more inclusive culture ... we cannot divorce inclusion from the contexts within which it is developing, nor the social relations that might sustain or limit that development.<sup>1</sup>*

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## Legality of our Special Education Policy

As a part of the British Columbia Public Education System, Rockridge Secondary School is mandated to abide by the guidelines and policies provided to us by the British Columbia Ministry of Education. With respect to Special Education, the Provincial Education Ministry provides a written resource that “conveys policies, procedures, and guidelines that support the delivery of special education services in British Columbia's public schools.”<sup>2</sup>

This resource provides guidance on six areas regarding the delivery of Special Education:

- A. **Policy:** provides policy for the delivery of special education programs and services in British Columbia.

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<sup>2</sup> Individual Education Planning for students with special needs: A resource guide for teachers.  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special\\_ed\\_policy\\_manual.pdf#page=5](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf#page=5)

- B. **Roles and Responsibilities:** outlines the roles and responsibilities of the ministry, school boards, district and school-based personnel, parents and students in the development and implementation of special education services.
- C. **Developing an Individual Education Plan:** describes the process of identifying students who have special needs, planning and implementing individual programs for them, and evaluating and reporting on their progress.
- D. **Special Considerations - Services:** describes the generic services that should be available in school districts to support service delivery.
- E. **Special Needs Categories:** defines the various kinds of students who have special needs and the essential elements that should be included in programs for them and the criteria that must be met for supplemental funding.
- F. **Provincial Resource Programs:** describes what these programs are and lists those currently designated across the province.

Using this document and relevant International Baccalaureate documentation as guidance, Rockridge Secondary has developed its own Special Education Policy to clearly outline how special needs students are guided towards academic success at Rockridge.

## Definition of Terms

### Differentiation

a teacher's supportive and empowering response to the "diverse learning needs of a student on a daily basis relying on a wide range of strategies, and flexibility of timing and approach."<sup>3</sup>

the recognition that "differences exist among all students, not just those with such labels"<sup>4</sup> and that teachers and students will organize learning in ways that allows for and supports those differences.

### Inclusion

describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with integration and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others.<sup>5</sup>

### Individual Education Plans

"is a documented plan developed for a student with special needs that describes individualized goals, adaptations, modifications, the services to be provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement."<sup>6</sup>

### School-Based Team (SBT)

"is an on-going team of school-based personnel which has a formal role to play as a problem-solving

<sup>3</sup> IB. Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes. "Differentiation." (2010). Cardiff, Wales. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Education. (2006). "Rethinking classroom assessment with purpose in mind: assessment as learning, assessment for learning, and assessment of learning." 8.

<sup>5</sup> British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Special Education Policy Manual*. (March 2011). Accessed on February 1, 2013 from [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special\\_ed\\_policy\\_manual.pdf#page=5](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf#page=5)

<sup>6</sup> British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Special Education Policy Manual*. (March 2011). Accessed on February 1, 2013 from [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special\\_ed\\_policy\\_manual.pdf#page=5](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf#page=5)

unit in assisting classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to coordinate support resources for students with special needs within the school.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Special educational need (SEN)**

“are those characteristics which make it necessary to provide a student undertaking an educational program with resources different from those which are needed by most students. Special educational needs are identified during assessment of a student; they are the basis for determining an appropriate educational program (including necessary resources) for that student.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Student with special needs**

“a student who has a disability of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioral nature, or has a learning disability”.<sup>9</sup>

### **Rockridge Special Education Philosophy**

Rockridge Secondary is a fully inclusive school that welcomes any student within our geographical boundary and then beyond. Meeting the needs of all our students is an integral part of Rockridge Secondary staff’s ethos. We recognize that our students come from a variety of backgrounds and have a range of academic, physical and other needs. Some may have a recognized and designated special educational need (SEN) and others may have special needs that have yet to be diagnosed. Our goal is to provide the support necessary for our students to demonstrate their learning.

Within our school, we have students with a range of special needs. Designations for these students include: Dependent Handicapped, Deaf and Blind, Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability, Physical Disability/Chronic Health, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impaired, Autistic, Intense Behaviour Support/Serious Mental Illness, Mild Intellectual Disability, Gifted, Learning Disabled, Moderate Behavior Support/Mental Illness.

We abide by the philosophy of full integration of our students with special needs where possible, with extra-support available within the Learning Assistance Centre and under the facilitation of a Special Education Teacher. “Teachers work with each student’s unique constellation of strengths and weaknesses, including those students with recognized special educational needs. However, an inclusive approach to education does not focus on labeling students, viewing students as patients who have been diagnosed with an illness, or understanding students with [special educational need] (SEN) as having deficits that make them anything other than full members of the school community.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Rockridge teachers differentiate their teaching and support a multitude of learning styles regardless of whether or not they are teaching students with identified special needs.<sup>11</sup> If, however, the teacher notices that a student may have reason to benefit from additional support, the teacher will, in conjunction with the student and parents, provide that support with the help of in-service, mentoring, and guidance from the Learning Assistance Center.<sup>12</sup> When that level of support proves inadequate, the teachers forward students’ names along with details of the contexts and the

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<sup>7</sup> British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Special Education Policy Manual*. (March 2011). Accessed on February 1, 2013 from [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special\\_ed\\_policy\\_manual.pdf#page=5](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf#page=5)

<sup>8</sup> British Columbia Ministry of Education. *Special Education Policy Manual*. (March 2011). Accessed on February 1, 2013 from [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special\\_ed\\_policy\\_manual.pdf#page=5](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf#page=5)

<sup>9</sup> B.C. Ministry of Education 2011: A Manual of Policy, Procedures and Guidelines

<sup>10</sup> IB Coordinator’s handbook. (2012-2013). “D5: Learning diversity and special educational needs. [http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/MYP/m\\_g\\_mypxx\\_coh\\_1208\\_2/ibpublishing.ibo.org/test-exist/rest/app/pub.xql@doc=m\\_g\\_mypxx\\_coh\\_1208\\_2\\_e&part=5&chapter=5.html](http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/MYP/m_g_mypxx_coh_1208_2/ibpublishing.ibo.org/test-exist/rest/app/pub.xql@doc=m_g_mypxx_coh_1208_2_e&part=5&chapter=5.html). Accessed January 5, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> IB. Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes. (2010). Cardiff, Wales. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *North Vancouver School District’s Inclusive Education: Addressing the Diverse Needs of Learners in the Classroom*.

supports already in place to the School-Based Team. The SBT can access additional levels of support from the Learning Support Program (LSP) Teacher, the counselor, the Resource Teacher and/or paraprofessionals.

Our school strives to provide all students with opportunities to succeed in the variety of educational programs offered within the BC curriculum. In understanding the diversity of learners under the auspices of an inclusionary educational model, Rockridge Secondary addresses ways in which student successes are embraced.

### Support within the Curricular Classroom

Teachers design learning experiences that allow their students to access the curriculum and demonstrate learning in ways best suited to the students. For students with special needs, Individual Education Plans provide the classroom teacher with information and strategies they can use to create meaningful and effective learning opportunities tailored to students' needs.

Each student recognized as having special learning needs has an IEP. This document is a collaborative effort between the Special Education teachers, school counselor, specialist staff, the involved paraprofessionals, and the student and student's family.

In addition to collaboration between involved parties, some IEPs draw recommendations for accommodations from psycho-educational testing reports generated from registered psychologists. On a yearly basis the IEP is updated to reflect any changes to each student's status. IEP's are stored both digitally and in hard copy and either form is accessible to those involved in ensuring the student's academic success.

As another means of supporting some students with special learning needs in curricular classrooms, Education Assistants (EAs) are assigned to individual and groups of students to provide more individualized support. These professionals attend post-secondary training specific to addressing the learning needs of special needs students to qualify them for this position.

The general principles listed below are respected when planning adaptations to teaching and assessment for students with special educational needs. In consultation with parents, Special Education teachers and classroom teachers coordinate these.<sup>13</sup>

1. Where normal assessment conditions would put students with special needs at a disadvantage and prevent them from demonstrating their level of ability, reasonable adjustments must be given for administration of assessment. Technology may be used where available to support learning and assessment.
2. In assessment, special adjustments put in place to help students with special educational needs demonstrate their true level of ability must not put these students at an advantage.
3. Any grade awarded to a student in any subject must not be a misleading description of the student's level of attainment according to the course objectives. Schools may differentiate conditions in relation to the interim objectives developed by teachers to suit the needs of their students and the local context. In the final year of the MYP, the same assessment criteria must be applied to all students in a given course, regardless of whether they have a special educational need. Special adjustments in assessment conditions are intended only to minimize the effects of a student's functional issues resulting from a special educational need.
4. Where any special arrangements are made for assessment, they must correspond to a school policy

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<sup>13</sup> IB Coordinator's handbook. (2012-2013). "D5: Learning diversity and special educational needs. [http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/MYP/m\\_g\\_mypxx\\_coh\\_1208\\_2/ibpublishing.ibo.org/test-exist/rest/app/pub.xql@doc=m\\_g\\_mypxx\\_coh\\_1208\\_2\\_e&part=5&chapter=5.html](http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/MYP/m_g_mypxx_coh_1208_2/ibpublishing.ibo.org/test-exist/rest/app/pub.xql@doc=m_g_mypxx_coh_1208_2_e&part=5&chapter=5.html). Accessed January 5, 2013.

on special educational needs and mirror the conditions available to the students in the classroom.<sup>14</sup>

## The Learning Support Program (LSP)

The Rockridge LSP is a nurturing environment where hard work and mutual respect create a sense of community and a positive experience for all. The LSP offers students academic support, while assisting students to better understand their personal strengths, needs, learning styles and effective strategies.

It is important to provide our students specific learning supports to suit their individual requirements. To provide this, it is first necessary to identify the most appropriate academic, social, behavioral and/or mental health designation for each student. Staff within the LSP administer a range of academic diagnostic assessments as well as testing for both behavioral and mental health diagnoses. Our model for delivering special education programs and services focuses upon the following:

- The central role of the classroom teacher
- The principle of active learning, providing:
  - Appropriate curriculum
  - Diversity of instructional methods
  - Adaptation or modification of instructional methods
  - Adaptation of assessment practices
- The principle of inclusionary education
- The practice of integration as a strategy to achieve inclusion
- The provision of programming and services in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment

The Rockridge LSP serves a diverse population of students with a broad range of learning needs and strengths. In keeping with the aims of the IB program, there is a focus on Approaches to Learning, self-discovery and personal responsibility. This fosters success in secondary school and lifelong learning. Learning strategies taught in the LSP specifically include: reading and writing skills, organization, time management, study and test-taking skills, and self-advocacy development. Helping students develop metacognitive skills is a major component of our approach.

### LSP's Potential Impact on MYP Curriculum on a Student by Student Basis

This Special Education works in concert with the *BC Ministry of Education's Language Policy*<sup>15</sup> as articulated in Section 5 of the *BC School Act*<sup>16</sup>:

All students must take a second language as part of the curriculum in Grades 5 to 8, except where students are:

- identified as having special needs or are receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) services; and,
- unable to demonstrate their learning in relation to the expected learning outcomes of the second language course; or,
- enrolled in late French Immersion in Grade 6.

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<sup>14</sup> IB Coordinator's handbook. (2012-2013). "D5: Learning diversity and special educational needs. [http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/MYP/m\\_g\\_myppx\\_coh\\_1208\\_2/ibpublishing.ibo.org/test-exist/rest/app/pub.xql@doc=m\\_g\\_myppx\\_coh\\_1208\\_2\\_e&part=5&chapter=5.html](http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/MYP/m_g_myppx_coh_1208_2/ibpublishing.ibo.org/test-exist/rest/app/pub.xql@doc=m_g_myppx_coh_1208_2_e&part=5&chapter=5.html). Accessed January 5, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> BC Language Policy: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/language\\_educ.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/language_educ.htm)

<sup>16</sup> BC School Act: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/revisedstatutescontents.pdf>

Should one of the above contexts apply, a student may be enrolled in an LSP block in place of a Language B block because, in accordance with the *BC School Act*, students “identified as having special needs” and who are “unable to demonstrate their learning in relation to the expected learning outcomes of the second language course” due to learning disabilities as explained in their Individual Education Plan may opt out of taking a Language B course.<sup>17</sup>

### Special Education Students transitioning to Rockridge Secondary from Elementary Schools

Each Spring Rockridge Secondary counselors and Special Education Teachers consult with our elementary feeder schools (Grades K-7) regarding the learning needs of incoming grade 7 students. These meetings provide information regarding the learning, social-emotional, behavioral or other needs and challenges of the students. This provides the opportunity to prepare to transition students who may need extra support as they enter secondary school.

### Rockridge Secondary Students transitioning to the LSP

In order to service students with specialized learning needs with equity and efficiency, the following process is adhered to before students are placed into LSP classes. Students considered for Learning Assistance and placement into a LSP block should have:

1. A designated learning disability as defined by the British Columbia Ministry of Education
2. Been recommended by a previous teacher based on a history of learning challenges and/or past Learning Assistance success

The following process is followed for transitioning a Rockridge student into the LSP:

1. Teachers or parents bring forth student specific concerns to either a grade counselor or a Special Education Teacher.
2. After SBT discussions, parents are contacted to see what interventions have been initiated at home.
3. Classroom intervention is attempted including differentiated curriculum, appropriate adaptations, and/or seeing teacher during tutorial times.

If interventions are attempted and challenges persist, the following will occur:

- i. The Special Education Teacher or counselor brings forth the name at the School Based Resource Team meeting (SBT) so that a team decision can be made around appropriate intervention or possible LSP placement.

### School Based Team (SBT)

At Rockridge Secondary, there is a network of professionals designed to coordinate student support services within the school – the School Based Team. This team is comprised of the following members:

- **Administration and teaching faculty** – these are the ‘front line’ support workers. They see students daily and provide curricular and emotional support.
- **Special Education Teachers**
- **District Administrator of Student Support Services**
- **Speech and Language Pathologist**

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<sup>17</sup> BC School Act: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/revisedstatutescontents.pdf>

- **School Counselors** – the school and district counselors provide services directly to students. In addition, the counselors often provide services to parents, administrators, and teachers. The diverse role of counseling is multi-faceted and comprises these main areas of guidance:
  - Personal / social
  - Scholastic / educational
  - Administrative consultation / liaison
  - Instructional
  - Career / transitional
- **Prevention Workers and Youth Outreach Workers** – these workers support students in areas of drug and alcohol prevention and abuse, anger management, youth counseling and social issues. While these workers maintain an office within the school, have office hours, are available on-call, and organize youth activities within the school timetable and building, they are an independent group whose services are provided to the school.

This team meets weekly as a multi-disciplinary team of school-based personnel who oversees the delivery of services and programs to students who have challenges and are not meeting widely held expectations. At SBT meetings, the team discusses students and service delivery issues, problem solves and plans interventions for specific students. The meetings usually result in written plans with action items and strategies.

### Student Services at the District Level

Under the direction of Rockridge Secondary’s Principal, the Family of Schools resources include comprehensive and collaborative access amongst the following professionals:

- Student Services Department Head
- Speech and Language Pathologists
- Teachers of the Visually and Hearing Impaired
- School Psychologists
- District Counselors
- Hospital / Homebound Teacher
- District Resource Teachers in Gifted Education
- Autism Consultant
- Aboriginal Education Consultant
- Occupational Therapist
- Learning Support Teacher
- Behaviour Support Worker

### Special Education Policy Alignment

Rockridge’s Special Education philosophy and policy align with our values and policies as outlined below. In all of these policies and positions, the student is central.

#### ... to our mission statement

Part of our mission statement is to nurture “global citizens in a respectful and diverse environment”.<sup>18</sup> Part of being a global citizen is learning that people come with all sorts of physical, emotional and intellectual diversity and that each person has value and can contribute something to the world. Building an inclusive environment in which all students learn to be together encourages mutual respect of one another and

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<sup>18</sup> Rockridge Handbook. (2012) “Mission Statement.” 4.

acceptance of difference. Another part of our mission statement is to teach compassion. Seeing that each person faces different struggles in life is an opportunity to learn compassion for one another and for ourselves.

#### ...to IB's fundamental concepts

Rockridge's Special Education Policy reflects the MYP fundamental concept of communication because our school is inclusive which provides many opportunities for students to learn that we can communicate with one another in a myriad of ways and that communication is paramount to building relationships. Our Special Education policy supports the IB's holistic approach to education as it honours each student as a person of value who deserves equitable access to quality education. As our policy and school are built to be inclusive – and as such typifies the Learner Profile. Finally, our Special Education policy supports the philosophy of intercultural education as it promotes the practice of looking at the world through alternative perspectives and seeing value in those perspectives.

#### ...to our Academic Honesty Policy

Our Special Education Policy aligns with our Academic Honesty Policy in that we teach students to use a variety of strategies and resources to best suit their learning needs. For instance, if students require more visual structure, they learn how to use note-taking graphic organizers for their research and learning. If students process better with oral note-taking, they are able to do so with technology or they will be offered the opportunity to use a scribe. The Academic Honesty Policy is essentially about the process of acquiring and processing information: as our Framework identifies various structures and scaffolds the skills necessary to maintain one's academic integrity, the policy thoughtfully supports the requirements of those with special needs.

#### ...to our Admissions Policy

Our Special Education Policy aligns with our Admissions policy of welcoming all types of students within our catchment first and then from without because we aim to support students' learning regardless of their learning needs.

#### ...to our Language Policy

Our Special Education Policy aligns with our Language Policy in that we require all students to enroll in a Language B unless their Individual Education Plan specifies otherwise. An IEP would only suggest otherwise if such a plan were in the best interests of the student under recommendation by the relevant specialists and paraprofessionals. This aspect of our policy is in accordance with our mandate from our provincial government and uses the flexibility intimated by this general principle as listed in the IB MYP Coordinator's Handbook:

“In many cases, local and national legislation mandate adjustments to methods of curriculum delivery for special educational needs. While the MYP tries to maximize parity across schools, it is recognized that forms and degrees of special assessment arrangements will vary according to cultural and legal differences between regions.”<sup>19</sup>

#### ...to our Assessment Policy

Our Special Education Policy aligns with our Assessment policy because our Assessment policy is directly applicable to all of our learners – regardless of their learning abilities. Flexibility is built into our Assessment policy to recognize and allow for use of technology or other means when students' special needs hinders their learning. Our Special Education Policy aligns with our Assessment Policy in that students are supported, where

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<sup>19</sup> IB Coordinator's handbook. (2012-2013). “D5: Learning diversity and special educational needs.

[http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/MYP/m\\_g\\_mypxx\\_coh\\_1208\\_2/ibpublishing.ibo.org/test-exist/rest/app/pub.xql@doc=m\\_g\\_mypxx\\_coh\\_1208\\_2\\_e&part=5&chapter=5.html](http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/MYP/m_g_mypxx_coh_1208_2/ibpublishing.ibo.org/test-exist/rest/app/pub.xql@doc=m_g_mypxx_coh_1208_2_e&part=5&chapter=5.html). Accessed January 5, 2013.



possible, in showing their learning in a myriad of ways as is appropriate to the task and the students' abilities. As quoted in our assessment policy, "Assessment should be diverse and relevant to the learner, allowing for differentiated assessments with different entry and exit points. The purposes and outcomes of the assessment process should be explicit to all. Elements of social interaction and personal growth should be part of the assessment process."<sup>20</sup>

### **Policy Review Protocol**

The Rockridge Special Education Policy is a working document. Since the needs of our student population are not static, this policy will be reviewed and revised as needed each Fall through the Curriculum Coordinators in consultation with departments, students, and the parent community via the School Planning Council.

### **Communication of the Special Education Policy**

The Special Education Policy will be listed with the other school policies on our public website. When appropriate, such as the approaching start date of the policy review process, parents and guardians will be notified and invited to participate through the Parent Advisory Council.

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<sup>20</sup> IB. Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes. "Assessment." (2010). Cardiff, Wales. 5.