

**Bess Streeter Aldrich Elementary**  
**Special Education Needs (SEN) Policy**



**Mission Statement:**

The mission of Bess Streeter Aldrich Elementary, an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme World School, is to guarantee academic excellence through the development of principled young people who become active, inquiring and compassionate life-long learners and global citizens by providing innovative opportunities and challenging programs of international understanding through guided inquiry.

**Philosophy:**

As an IB PYP World School, it is our belief that students come from a variety of backgrounds and exhibit a range of learning profiles supported by the IB's approach to teaching and learning. To provide access to the IB PYP at Aldrich we apply strategies and support programs that address the individual needs and varied learning styles of ALL students.

Our SEN policy supports the following IB PYP standards and practices that support a diversity of learning:

- A9: The school supports access for students to the IB programme and philosophy
  - The school implements the PYP as an inclusive programme for all students
- B1.5: The school develops and implements policies and procedures that support the programme.
  - The school has developed and implements a language policy consistent with IB expectations.
  - The school has developed and implements an assessment policy that is consistent with IB expectations.
- B2.8: The school provides and support for its students with learning and/or special education needs and support for teachers.
- C1.6: Collaborative planning and reflection incorporates differentiation for students' learning needs and styles.
- C3.10: Teaching and learning differentiates instruction to meet students' learning needs and styles.
  - The school provides for grouping and regrouping of students for a variety of learning purposes.

**Purpose:**

Our SEN policy guides our practice to:

- Support access for ALL students in the IB PYP
- Meet the needs of ALL students
- Define the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder (staff, student and parent)
- Define the structures and systems needed to support all students
- Align resources

**Practices:**

**Inclusion**

Aldrich Elementary supports the following IB principles of an inclusive education:

- Inclusion is a process by which schools and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include all students.
- An inclusive education service offers excellence and choice, incorporating the views of all stakeholders.
- The interests of all students must be safeguarded.

- The school community and other authorizing bodies should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation.
- All students should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential.
- With the right skills training, strategies and support, the majority of students with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education.
- Mainstream education will not always be appropriate for every student all of the time. Equally, just because mainstream education may not be appropriate at a particular stage, it does not prevent the student from being included successfully at any other stage.

*~Special education needs in IB programmes, 2010*

## **Differentiated Instruction**

At Aldrich Elementary, the classroom teacher provides flexible instructional grouping of students based on their on-going identified need to achieve grade level goals. The classroom teacher adjusts the degree of complexity of the content to meet the needs of students performing well beyond expectations, on level, or far below expected levels of achievement. Through experience and training, instructionally effective teachers possess the skills to employ instructional techniques that have the greatest impact on learning. They effectively:

- Select and use a variety of research-based materials and appropriately leveled text
- Form flexible groups to meet the needs of individual students
- Administer progress monitoring assessments to instruct and regroup students according to student knowledge and skill acquisition
- Create an environment in which children have access to a variety of high-quality opportunities and materials
- Utilize instructional resources effectively

At Aldrich Elementary, we have one special education teacher, a special education paraprofessional, speech-language pathologist and a Literacy teacher to provide differentiated instruction both in and out of the general classroom.

## **Assessment**

Collaborative planning allows Aldrich Elementary teachers to design classroom formative and summative assessments that allow students to demonstrate their learning in a way that best matches their needs as learners. District and state testing will be administered to all students in accordance to the set testing requirements, unless otherwise indicated in a student's IEP or 504 plan.

### **Four principals of good practice:**

#### **Affirming identity and building self esteem**

Each classroom at Aldrich Elementary affirms identity by:

- Promoting a class and school environment that welcomes and embraces the diversity of learners
- Valuing and using the diversity of cultural perspectives to enhance learning
- Liaising with parent to establish understanding of how best to collaborate to achieve shared goals

*~Special education needs in IB programmes, 2010*

#### **Valuing prior knowledge**

Through collaborative planning and reflections, teachers at Aldrich Elementary:

- Explicitly activate learners' prior knowledge
- Use their knowledge of learners' prior understanding to differentiate tasks and activities that build further background knowledge necessary for new learning to occur

- Record information in learning profiles that will support planning for future differentiation and inform teacher practice
- Consider the time and strategies necessary for activating and building background knowledge when planning a unit of inquiry

*~Special education needs in IB programmes, 2010*

### **Scaffolding**

Aldrich Elementary teachers use instructional scaffolding to promote a deeper level of learning. Scaffolding strategies enable students to accomplish a task that would otherwise be impossible or much more difficult for them to accomplish. Examples of scaffolding strategies include:

- Graphic organizers
- Visual aids
- Demonstrations and models
- Small structured collaborative groups
- Differentiated teacher language and questions

Although all students need scaffolding at times, these strategies are especially important for students with special needs. For some students, specific scaffolding strategies are written into Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or 504 plans.

### **Extending Learning**

Teachers at Aldrich Elementary help students extend their learning by providing numerous opportunities for students to read and write increasingly sophisticated texts in the content areas of the curriculum. Teachers provide specific, rich texts to students along with structured responses that allow students to reflect on the concepts and vocabulary being presented within the text. Students are required to write within the requirement of specific writing genres, but are also given opportunities to write authentic texts of their own choosing.

### **Support for students through the RTI+I process and Special Education Services:**

The Millard Public Schools Response to Instruction + Intervention (RTI+I) Model is based on an instructional staff that is knowledgeable, including skilled teachers who use a systematic and explicit approach to instruction. While most models use the title of Response to Intervention (RTI), our RTI+I model begins with the regular classroom teacher's instruction (I), then adds(+) the intervention (I) teacher's instruction through a collaborative planning process.

The RTI+I Model:

- Is a systematic, data-driven approach to instruction that utilizes all resources with a school and district in a collaborative manner to create a single, well-integrated system of instruction and interventions informed by student data
- Focuses on the individual student and provides a vehicle to strengthen performance for struggling students before educational problems increase in intensity and special education seems the only viable option
- Consists of three tiers of instruction:
  - Tier I – District Approved Classroom Instruction
  - Tier II – Supplemental Targeted Instruction
  - Tier III – Intensive Targeted Interventions

### **Referral to Multidisciplinary or Section 504 Team:**

Following Intensive Targeted Instruction that has not resulted in the student's satisfactory rate of achievement of grade level skills and concepts, the student may be referred to a Multidisciplinary or Section 504 Team for consideration and possible evaluation to determine eligibility for services as a student with a disability.

## **Special Education Services:**

The Millard Public School District Special Education Program supports and complies with the continuum of special education services as required by Nebraska Special Education Rule 51. The district provides the resources needed for the implementation of the students' Individual Education Plan.

Students with special needs who are assigned to a general education classroom and spend most of their day in that setting can be provided services through the Resource Program. Supports and services are provided in identified areas on students' IEPs and can be implemented by the special education teacher, the general education teacher, or a paraprofessional in either the general education classroom or a small group setting.

Related services are support services identified to assist students with special needs in order to benefit from their special education program. In Millard Public Schools, these services can include speech/language services, physical and occupational therapy, adaptive physical education, vision services, audiological services, and assistive technology. IEP teams determine eligibility for related services based on individual student needs.

## **Support for students identified as High Ability Learners (HAL):**

### **Goals, Philosophy, Definition of High Ability Learner:**

High Ability Learner students differ markedly from their peers in abilities, interests, and psychological maturity. The High Ability Learner gives evidence of high performance capability in areas of intellectual capacity and/or specific academic disciplines.

In the continuing pursuit of educational excellence, the Millard Public Schools will recognize and develop the unique talents and diverse qualities of students with high academic, intellectual, creative, and/or artistic ability so that each child will be challenged to achieve his or her full potential. This will be accomplished through:

- a partnership of students, home, school and community,
- clearly defined criteria for identification and curriculum development and measurable standards of student performance, and
- broad-based and diverse educational opportunities.

The goals are to:

- Provide appropriately challenging educational experiences that will encourage students to learn, to challenge themselves, and to contribute positively to society.
- Facilitate in each student the development of a healthy self-concept, an understanding of human diversity, and the life skills necessary for personal success and responsible living.

Three levels of service for elementary high ability learners are provided in the Millard Public Schools.

1. District Level Services: Programs and curricula that are offered to all students in all buildings include: Language Arts, Math, Visual Spatial, The Arts, and Independent Study.
2. Building Level Service: National Geographic Bee, ALEKS, Chess Club, Robotics club
3. Classroom Level Services: These services are based on differentiation. Differentiation involves varied approaches to curriculum, instruction and assessment. Teachers differentiate to adapt content, process and product to the unique needs, readiness, interest and style of each student.

### **Support for Parents:**

We provide multiple opportunities for parents to learn about school support for student with special needs. These include:

- The District and Aldrich web site
- Weekly school newsletter
- Parent/student/teacher conferences
- Meetings with school support staff and/or administration as requested

### **Communication and Evaluation of Policy:**

Our SEN policy is posted on the school website. It will be reviewed annually by the entire staff. When formal revisions to the policy are being considered, feedback will be obtained from the staff, Building Data Team and Student Support Team (Special Education resource teacher, High Ability Learner Facilitator, and Literacy specialist).

- *Definition.* The definition of special education needs in the policy indicates what special educational needs are recognized and how students are identified as having them. Who or what qualifies as special educational needs is not universally agreed upon.
- *Responsibilities.* The special educational needs responsibilities in the policy define who is responsible for identifying and supporting students with special needs. It will shed more light on the process of identification and support of special needs students.
- *Differentiated support.* The policy should provide information on how teaching approaches and supports are differentiated to match students' needs. According to the IB, "differentiation should be visible and transparent in policy documents in order to meet IB expectations for authorization and evaluation."
- *Accommodations for assessment.* The policy should include information on how accommodations are made in the assessment process for students with special educational needs. For Diploma Programme schools, the accommodations should match those that are allowed by the IB.