



## Special Education Policy

In accordance with Federal and State Law, Voyage Academy will ensure that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is available to any qualified student with a disability who needs special education and related services.

Voyage Academy will serve students with special needs using an inclusion model to the extent possible, while at the same time ensuring that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of the students with disabilities as determined by the IEP team. The instructional staff will include at least one full-time special educator with special education certification. In addition, consultative and other contractual services will be arranged as necessary to meet the requirements of students' Individual Educational Plans (IEP). The Director and Special Education staff will ensure the school is compliant with all requirements of IDEA as revised in 2004. Additionally, they will work with the USOE Special Education Department for help in the implementation of alternative testing procedures for special education students.

### Delivery Of Services

Several elements of Voyage Academy's instructional approach are designed to enable the school to more effectively respond to diverse demands and help accelerate the learning of students with disabilities. These include:

- A. The school will use Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), placing students with special needs along with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate, while at the same time ensuring that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of the students with disabilities as determined by the IEP team. This heterogeneous grouping of students provides greater opportunities for students to learn from and support each other. The school's project-based approach is optimal for differentiating learning activities to address the needs of individual students. However, students qualifying for special education services may be pulled out for one-on-one or small group instruction with a special educator or related service provider. Removal from the regular education environment will occur if the nature or severity of the disability precludes satisfactory achievement, even with the use of supplementary aids and services in the regular classroom. These kinds of important decisions will be directed by the requirements in a student's IEP.
- B. Team-based approach. A key factor in learning is motivation. The team approach is designed to help motivate students to more fully engage themselves in the learning process. The team approach also provides a good mechanism for facilitating peer-tutoring and other assistance to students with special needs. Voyage Academy will use its school wide structure of "crew" to provide this team-based culture for all students, including those with disabilities.



- C. Cooperative learning. A significant body of research has shown that cooperative learning instructional strategies produce greater academic learning, enhanced self-esteem, and improves relationships between mainstreamed academically challenged students and normal-progress students. The approach enables all students to experience success and places students in a position in which they more naturally learn from their peers.
- D. Hands-on, experiential learning. These types of activities enhance learning for all students, but they are often particularly helpful for students that struggle with more traditional instructional approaches. Students have greater opportunity to employ their “multiple intelligences” to gain understanding of key concepts. In addition to the work of Howard Gardner, these activities are supported by research in the Cognitive Sciences. Active Pedagogy will be a key element in teaching practices throughout the school.
- E. High expectations. All students will be expected to set and achieve challenging academic goals designed to accelerate their learning. Progress will be charted in their student portfolios. Each student, regardless of disability, will learn to take personal responsibility for their own learning. Voyage Academy will ensure each student is treated as an individual, with special gifts and needs. Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with disabilities in order to ensure access to all activities.

### Continuum of Services

Voyage Academy will implement all existing IEP's. The school will provide eligible students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). To assist each student to achieve commensurate with his or her abilities, special education will be offered, including modification of instructional level, content or performance criteria; adaptations to the environment, curriculum, instruction or assessment; and accommodations to allow students to access and demonstrate learning. Voyage Academy will provide a continuum of special education services, and will service all students with disabilities, regardless of severity. Outsourcing will be utilized if necessary to service IEP's; funds have been budgeted for this purpose. However, it is anticipated that most of the special needs will be appropriately addressed by the school's full-time special education staff.

### Identification-- (Child Find & Referrals)

All members of the instructional staff will be trained annually by the special education staff in confidentiality and “child find” procedures. Voyage Academy will ensure identification of special education students includes the notification of, and ongoing communication with parents. The special education staff will oversee all aspects of child find, including: Awareness, Outreach, Screening, Evaluation and Collaboration. Teachers may refer students to the special education teacher for testing, or parents can also seek testing for their child if they suspect a problem.



After a child has been identified as needing assessment, the special education teacher will do a preliminary evaluation to determine if other specialists are needed. This shall be done in a timely manner consistent with State and Federal guidelines. Then, with parental permission, assessments will be made, and an Individualized Education Program can be implemented, if necessary. IEP's will be under the direction of the special education staff, along with an IEP team. This team will include the parents, the teacher, the Director and any specialists as needed. The student may also be involved, if appropriate.

Once identified, the IEP Team will determine levels of need and special education of the child, and will refer the child for needed available special services. Referring teachers will submit appropriate screening forms and document all previous classroom interventions that are pertinent to the child's placement. If a child is found eligible for special education services, an IEP will be developed. The IEP team will convene within 30 calendar days of eligibility to develop an IEP. No special education services will be provided prior to the development of the IEP.

### Annual Review/Records

Each IEP will be reviewed not less than once a year. Any team member may request additional IEP meetings. Prior to each IEP meeting, a written Meeting Notice will be provided to each member, including the parent, with adequate time to ensure participation. During the IEP review, progress toward annual goals will be addressed, along with the results of any reevaluation conducted, and any information from the team members regarding the needs of the child. Documentation of the annual goals review will be recorded on the original copy of the IEP being reviewed. A revised IEP will be completed not less than once a year or as required by the IEP itself. Voyage Academy will aggressively work to transfer all existing IEP's from previous schools. The special education staff will request, review, maintain, and transfer student records as required by the USOE and IDEA 2004.

### English Language Learners

Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) will be served at Voyage Academy on an inclusion based setting. The school will welcome students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. We will comply with the standards set by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) for the education of students who speak a second language. We will provide for Identification, Testing, Placement and Instructional design for ESL students. On the registration form we will ask the question "Is a second language spoken in the home?" If the answer is yes, the student will be tested by a certified teacher with an ESL endorsement using a standard testing instrument, such as the Ideal Proficiency Test (IPT). Based on their test results, the students will be served by an endorsed ESL teacher, who will work closely with the other teachers.

Working together, we will ensure that the distinct educational needs of these students will be met as they are included in the Crews and participate in the expeditions. Some of the techniques used may include the SIOP Model (Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners) Sheltered Instruction Observational



Protocol, direct teaching of target vocabulary, and Total Physical Response (TPR).

Voyage Academy will encourage participation by the parents and families of ESL students, recognizing that their rich and diverse cultural backgrounds may provide many resources to the school.