

## **LEARNING DIFFERENCES AND DISABILITIES (for Standard)**

Recognizing that God gives each of us differing strengths and weaknesses, our faculty and staff seek to direct students with compassion, godly counsel, and corrective feedback as they navigate the challenges of learning. Agathos is committed to making every effort within its capacity to support students with diagnosed learning differences and other disabilities within the classroom through reasonable accommodations. However, all such students must first meet our standard admissions requirements.

A learning disability is here defined as any condition in a student which does not require a separate classroom, special program, or specialized staff in order to provide the education services desired by the parents and meet the regular academic requirements of Agathos. Examples of learning disabilities include but are not limited to hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, and dyslexia. Agathos is not prepared to serve students with severe learning disabilities. A severe learning disability is here defined as any condition in a student which would require a separate classroom, special program, or specialized staff in order to provide the educational services desired by the parents. Examples of severe learning disabilities include but are not limited to Down's syndrome, deafness, muteness, and blindness.

Prior to admission, parents must disclose all specific recommendations that have already been given by therapists, specialists, or other examiners that may be vital to the student's success at Agathos. Once admitted, students must meet and maintain the same minimal academic and behavioral expectations as all other Agathos students. Agathos will strive to offer reasonable accommodations to students that do not significantly alter school standards or make fundamental alterations to the nature of its programs (e.g., classroom instruction or expectations). Accommodations allow students to complete the same assignments or tests as other students but with a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response and/or presentation. Classroom accommodations do not significantly alter classroom instruction or expectations. When accommodations are provided regularly for any student, standardized educational assessment and documentation is necessary. If parents believe an accommodation is needed that is not being provided, a parent-teacher-administrator conference may be held to discuss the issue. Standardized assessments and documentation of disabilities will be required.

After receiving (from the parents) and considering test results from a licensed and certified educational diagnostician, an administrator in conjunction with the teacher and parents will create an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that expresses in writing those accommodations that Agathos is willing and able to implement. Agathos reserves the right to decline any accommodation recommended to a student by a diagnostician if it deems the accommodation to be a hindrance to the learning experience of other students in the school or if it deems the accommodation may compromise the school's academic standards.

These policies do not reflect an ambivalence on the part of Agathos' administration or staff toward those parents who seek a Christian education for their special needs child, but rather reflect our current limitations in staffing, training, and classroom facilities. We desire to assist all families with creative solutions for discharging their responsibilities to educate all of their children, regardless of abilities, in a Christ-centered and God-honoring manner.

## **SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL (for Staff Handbook)**

1. Parents must inform the school at the time of application of any special needs diagnoses. The teacher and an administrator will assess what accommodations may be offered if any. Accommodations will only be made for students who have been assessed and officially diagnosed with a learning disability. Documentation of that specific diagnosis must be kept on file in the school office. Final approval of admission will rest with the Head of School.
2. Before accommodations are made, any admitted student with an official diagnosis must have an IEP (individual education plan) on file. A meeting with the Parent, Teacher, Special Education Supervisor and Administrator must take place at a minimum yearly and as needed to determine or revise the goals, objectives and acceptable accommodations to be included in the IEP and to evaluate progress towards the goals prescribed.
3. The student will be held to the same minimal academic and behavioral standards as all other students.
4. Already enrolled students who are identified as at risk or display signs of a learning disability through regular classroom assessment that do not have an official diagnosis will be referred for additional testing.

## **FOR PARENTS WHOM WE RECOMMEND TESTING FOR THE STUDENT:**

### **IDEA does state that local public school districts must provide the following for students educated in non-public schools:**

- Evaluate a private school student for special education if a [referral](#) has been made.
- Determine if the student is eligible for special education services.
- Develop an appropriate Instructional School Plan (ISP) for the child's school.
- Consult with parents and the student's teachers when developing an Instructional School Plan.

If a child is struggling at the private school and is deemed to need an evaluation to determine if he/she has a disability, the evaluation will be conducted by a special education team from the public school where the private school is located.

Once a child has been identified within the private school to need an evaluation, the process begins as stated by law and is subject to a timeline. The parent needs to sign a consent form and testing must be completed no later than 30 days from the date the form is returned. A meeting must be held within 45 days of the date of consent. Parents are responsible for transporting their child to and from testing sessions at the local public school subject to the availability of the evaluators. The public school psychologist will commonly visit the private school to observe the child in his/her class.

Once eligibility is determined, a special educator at the public school will write an IEP within 5 school days of the meeting with specific service recommendations, however; the private school can integrate those services depending on its resources. In many cases, the student will leave the private school for a portion of the day to receive services at the local public school. In this case, it is the parent's responsibility to provide transportation.

IDEA 2004 is more specific concerning children entering private school with an IEP, but it goes back to the aforementioned idea that these children are not protected under FAPE. In this case, the private school can contact the public school where it is located, and have services delivered at the public school during the school day with parental transportation. The private school can also offer to deliver the IEP services according to their resources/supports as long as this is a team decision with parental agreement.