

2022

Al Zahra College

Inclusion and Special Educational Needs Policy



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Policy

Rationale

The MYP/DP is intended to be an inclusive programme that caters to the needs of all students. Al Zahra College (AZC) recognises and supports the IB philosophy of making the IB programmes accessible to the broadest possible range of students. While acknowledging the academic rigor of the IB programmes and the importance of encouraging students to pursue the full diploma, we commit to minimising barriers to student participation.

Purpose

The Special Educational Needs/ Inclusion Policy is a working document developed by a committee of teachers and administrators from Al Zahra College. Consistent with the standards and practices of the International Baccalaureate, this document provides an overview of AZC's beliefs and practices as they relate to the special educational needs of our students. This policy outlines the processes implemented at AZC to ensure that all students have to access to the school curriculum, so that they can fulfil the mission of both IB and AZC.

Mission

Al Zahra College aims to develop faithful, knowledgeable and wise young people who take responsibility for creating a better and more peaceful world. We will challenge our students to become active learners and critical thinkers who promote intercultural understanding and respect. Therefore, we aim to develop internationally minded learners who strive to be inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective.

Students with Special Educational Needs Philosophy

We believe that a good school is one that is inclusive, recognises the individual needs of students, and provides a variety of authentic learning opportunities. AZC IB teachers are committed to ensuring that the learning needs of SEN students are met and have experience adapting their teaching and assessment procedures to maximise student success.

AZC provides a special education team dedicated to meeting the needs of a wide variety of learners and working with the classroom teachers to achieve this end. Our special education team will employ a wide variety of strategies, including technology, to address student needs and support teachers. The team will have access to a variety of testing and screening tools, as well as information from SEN students' previous schools. Additionally, AZC will keep full, up-to-date documentation on all its SEN students, available to staff serving SEN students. Our school will employ a number of specialist professionals, including psychologists and speech therapists.

We understand and endorse the principle that any assistance tendered to students through the SEN process is not intended to "compensate for lack of ability." We also recognise that it is our responsibility to determine whether accommodations can be made for individual candidates and that all such accommodations must be in agreement with IB policy. We appreciate that applications for special arrangements have specific requirements and may need appropriate supporting documentation. We shall ensure that all special arrangements comply with IB Documents.

AZC Program aims

The aims of AZC's Special Educational Needs program is:

- To provide a positive and friendly environment to all learners with varying needs, recognising and capitalising on differences and diversity
- To provide all children access to curriculum through inclusion and differentiated teaching methods
- To monitor student success as shown through data, and communicate with all stakeholders about students, their progress, and their changing needs
- To guide all students to reach their unique intellectual capabilities

AZC Inclusion Goals

1. To challenge and promote active and critical learners

At AZC, we believe it is important to “challenge our students to become active and critical thinkers”. By providing curriculum that is accessible and appropriately challenging to all students, we can foster inquiry and offer students opportunities to build upon their knowledge, so they can become caring and active members of our communities.

2. To develop IB Learner profile attributes

In order to encourage their ability to master the IB learner profile attributes, they need to be provided with the least restrictive environment possible. This means ensuring that students receive meaningful and equitable access to the curriculum.

3. To nurture intercultural understanding and respect

“Nurturing intercultural understanding and respect” among students happens when educators understand and respect the needs of all learners. Being conscious of the unique personal and educational needs of each student, we recognise and appreciate that not every individual can have the same educational experience. We see the diversity of our learning community as a positive resource that can enrich learning, providing opportunities for students and staff to heighten their awareness and expand their thinking

Procedures

Our Special Educational Needs (SEN) population includes students who need adjustments or adaptations to curriculum in order to meet their learning needs and facilitate continued academic growth. These students may include, but are not limited to:

- Students who are in need of counselling support
- Students with medical or health issues
- Emotional and behavioural issues
- High achieving or gifted students who are driven to pursue further inquiry

Recording

AZC MYP/DP will ensure that documentation and registration of SEN students conform with IB expectations. It should be noted that all such accommodations are currently available for all AZC students and that AZC's staff is experienced in meeting the range of SENs listed in the *Candidates with Special Assessment needs* document:

- Diagnosed learning, language and disorders
- Sensory challenges
- Medical conditions, including mental health issues

Local Legislation Compliance

The College adheres to Federal and State regulations regarding inclusion by being compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005). Where necessary, Individual Plans (IEP's) will be developed to ensure that the student's needs and necessary adjustments are identified and the way in which the adjustments will be implemented is determined. Under the Australian Education Act, the College also participates in the annual Nationally Consistent Collection of Data. Through this collection, data is collected about the number of school students with disability and the level of reasonable adjustments they are provided with.

Application Process

Students with special education needs will be encouraged to apply for the IB MYP/DP programme and shall be accepted provided they meet the criteria laid out in our application process. The school will ensure that the needs of these students are met per the guidelines in the *Candidates with special assessment needs* document.

Our application process balances the principles of accessibility with the need to ensure student readiness and parental support. A variety of measures, including references, previous report cards, a student entry assessment, and an interview, will guide student selection. All interested students shall be encouraged to apply and all students with financial or special educational will try to be accommodated based on the College's ability to cater or their needs.

Prior to the application process, information regarding the IB programme shall be widely disseminated and public meetings shall be advertised and held in order to reach the broadest possible audience.

AZC is a school that strongly encourages participation for all students. It is vital to establish at an early stage whether the school programme offered is appropriate to the applicant's needs, and whether the student can benefit from the curriculum. Applications from students who have received counselling, support, therapy, or who have diagnosed special educational needs should include all relevant diagnostic reports and evaluation documentation for confidential review.

Timetable and IB Course Selection

The timetable is developed to allow for the required MYP/DP hours and maximise concurrency of learning. In addition, AZC offers a wide variety of extracurricular clubs and sports. In short, we ensure that all students at AZC have full access to curricular and non-curricular opportunities.

AZC MYP/DP teachers meet at the beginning of each school year to create a deadlines calendar in order to minimise conflict with extra-curricular and other activities. All necessary counselling is provided in order that students make the most appropriate course selections for their interests, aptitudes, and future goals.

Inclusion

At AZC, every effort is made to provide the least restrictive learning environment that appropriately matches the needs of each student. Therefore, inclusion can be implemented differently for each student, depending on many factors such as, but not limited to:

- the student's skill level
- the student's previous learning experiences
- the unit of study

At AZC, inclusion can take many forms including:

- Students present in the mainstream classroom
- Access to common curriculum for all students
- Support in the common classroom from the Learning Support Teacher, collaborative co-teachers, external professional support staff and modifications from the classroom teacher

Inclusion is more about responding positively to each individual's unique needs and less about marginalising students because of their differences (Boyle, Anderson, 2020).

If the student needs provisions, the DPC must submit the application for inclusive arrangements (including additional language learners) on behalf of the student for authorisation.

All requests for access arrangements for IB assessments must be:

- based on the usual way of learning and teaching in the classroom
- in line with the eligibility criteria stated in the *IB Access and Inclusion Policy*
- submitted along with supporting documents as evidence
- submitted by the deadline stated in the *Assessment procedures* for the DP.

If authorised, the DPC is responsible for making all arrangements for approving and appointing individuals required to support an access arrangement and provide the necessary mediums to do so.

Any authorised IB inclusive arrangement must then be transferred to the classroom. For example, if a student requires 25% extra time, this should be made possible during the school's assessment calendar period like half-yearly and yearly examinations or in-class examinations.

Differentiation

"Differentiation can help learners access the content at an appropriate level through a variety of resources" (Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes (IB 2010).

Differentiation is a system of strategies that appropriately structure the curriculum so that each learner can reach their true potential. Differentiation "puts students at the centre of the planning" helping teachers "respond specifically to their needs" (Making Differentiation a Habit: How to Ensure

Success in Academically Diverse Classrooms 57). Accordingly, teachers utilise:

- Collaborative and cooperative learning strategies
- A variety of learning practices
- Creative approaches to teaching
- Differing formats and modes of exploring and presenting knowledge

Roles in Supporting SEN/Inclusion

AZC has an inclusive environment, where teachers work with each students' unique strengths and weaknesses, including those students with certain recognised learning support and medical needs. Students with mild learning support needs may receive support from the class teacher and learning support teachers. AZC has some contact with specialists who can provide one-on-one support out of school and will stay in contact with class teachers in order to give advice on how to support the student in class. However, the school will carefully assess and monitor this in close collaboration with parents.

Teacher roles

i Learning support teacher

They are supporters for academic, social, and emotional/ behavioural knowledge and skills of students. The learning support teacher implements all developed programs during timetabled support sessions. The organisation of the support session is individualised to meet the needs of each class. The learning support teacher can assist in three different contexts:

Team Teaching: This process involves the learning support teacher working collaboratively with the class teacher and supporting the teaching and learning process of the current program. In this process, students have access to the stage syllabus outcomes.

Group support: This process involves a small support group engaged in learning some, all or no outcomes addressed in the stage syllabus of the KLA. The teaching and learning variation may be:

- more appropriate pacing of syllabus outcomes to meet the need of support students
- implementing outcomes from earlier stages on the continuum of learning in order to address specific academic needs

Individual support: This process involves the support teacher working on a one-to-one basis with students who have been identified as at risk with higher learning difficulties. During support sessions, teachers are actively involved in explicit teaching methods; modelling should be utilised in all speaking and listening, reading and writing opportunities.

Where necessary, the learning support teacher, in collaboration with the MYP/DP coordinator, will develop Individual Plans (IP) for Special Education students and hold annual IP meetings. Learning support teachers are the case managers for Special Education students. They create goals for each student, track the student's progress toward those goals, collect data, and inform all stakeholders of each student's progress and needs, through the use of progress reports. Learning support teachers work with students in the most conducive environment for each student. This could be through inclusion, co-teaching, small group settings, or individual settings. Learning support teachers modify tasks for students guided by assessment results. These teachers are learning strategists who collaborate with classroom teachers to provide modifications and adaptations.

ii Subject-specific teacher

The subject-specific teacher is a content specialist. They develop the curriculum sequence and instructional objectives. The teacher collaborates with the learning support teacher and MYP/DP coordinator to plan and develop lessons, as well as modify and adapt curriculum to meet the needs of all students. The subject-specific teacher communicates with the learning support teacher about students' progress on an informal basis throughout the school year. This can occur when information is requested or if questions/ concerns arise. They also formally communicate with the learning support teacher about the progress of Special Education students for their quarterly progress reports and annual IP meeting.

lii External support services

If there is a student at the College who has special needs which cannot be accommodated for by the college, the college will seek external support if deemed reasonable and necessary and is within the resources of the college.

- **School Psychologist**

The School Psychologist provides psychological evaluations of students who have special educational needs.

- **Speech Pathologist**

The Speech Pathologist services students with speech and language needs as addressed in an IP. The Speech Pathologist may service students individually or in a small group setting. The Speech Pathologist works with students' goals as identified on their annual IPs and collaborates with learning support teacher and MYP/DP coordinator. The Speech Pathologist at AZC is a consultant who works with students 2-3 days per week.

- **Current external support**

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children provides a consultant that regularly supports a student with vision impairment. The school support service also provides opportunities for resources to be made up to support the learning of the vision-impaired student.

Learning Support Referral Procedures

Identification

Each subject-specific teacher is responsible for establishing a differentiated classroom. A differentiated classroom is described by Tomlinson (2000) as a classroom where the teacher begins where students are at, not at the front of a curriculum/syllabus document. A differentiated classroom with relevant interventions is the first level of learning support once a teacher has identified a student with learning difficulties at Al Zahra College (see flowchart on p. 9).

Strategies at this first stage of intervention may include (but are not limited to):

- Adjustments to classroom organisation and seating arrangements
- Consideration of individual communication strategies, including verbal and non-verbal communication systems
- Additional demonstration of key concepts and skills by the teacher or the student's peers
- A range of appropriate learning activities with structured opportunities for guided and independent practice, as well as effective feedback
- Additional support through group work or peer tutoring
- Appropriate materials and resources that support teaching and learning activities e.g. the use of technology, alternate formats such as large print, simplified texts, subtitled DVDs.

If class teachers determine that interventions are not helping increase student progress, the information is sent to the MYP/DP Coordinator. The information will be discussed with the learning

support teacher. The MYP/DP Coordinator then schedules a meeting with the student's parents/guardians to discuss their student's progress during the interventions and the possibility of a Special Education initial evaluation.

The evaluation may or may not include: an interview with the parents/guardians about their concerns, the student's strengths and weaknesses, and the student's medical or health background intellectual testing academic testing communication/speech testing motor testing sensory testing social/emotional/ behavioural rating scales. The MYP/DP Coordinator then sends an Individual Plan (IP) home, describing the specific assessments that will be conducted and who will conduct them. Parents/Guardians must return the IP, with their signature, before the evaluation can begin. Once permission is returned to the school, the College has 30 school days to complete the evaluation. Once the evaluation is completed, parents/guardians are contacted to set up a meeting. During this meeting, the MYP/DP coordinator shares the results of the evaluation and the eligibility determination for Special Education services. Parents/Guardians must sign the eligibility determination signature page to either agree or disagree with the evaluation results.

* Individual planning is a collaborative process whereby issues relating to a student's ability to access and participate in the curriculum as well as other broader opportunities provided by a school are identified and adjustments to facilitate greater access and participation are determined. An individual plan (IP) is the result of the collaborative planning process. The individual planning process may highlight the need for a separate and more targeted support plan, e.g. behaviour support plan, health care plan, risk assessment. The (IP) broadly identifies areas of need for a student and includes information where more detailed planning is required.

In-school Learning Support Procedures

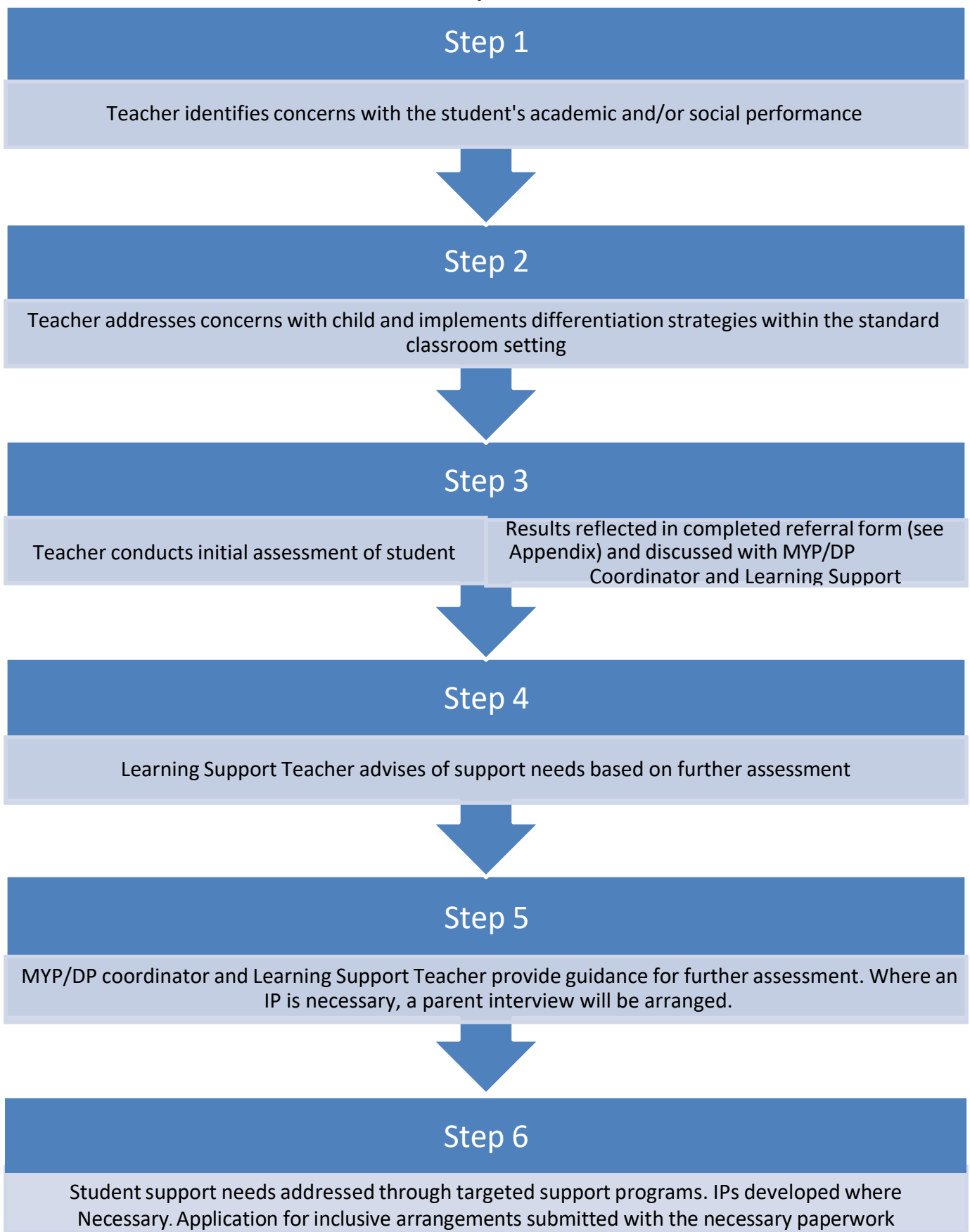
Collaboration

Learning support teachers, classroom teachers and the MYP/DP coordinator collaborate by working together to improve access to the curriculum for all students. This provides subject area teachers with strategies they can use to better meet the needs of Special Education students in all of their classes throughout the day.

Support within the general education classroom

Support for Special Education students within the general education classroom can take many forms. Class teachers use the strategies learned from collaboration, as well modifications and accommodations listed in students' IPs, to differentiate the curriculum and reach each Special Education student. While in the classroom, learning support members also utilise co-teaching models to support Special Education students. These models may include: one teach, one drift or the learning support teacher checks in with individual Special Education students and provides redirection on academic processes, as needed, while the class teacher instructs the class as a whole.

Chart: Process for Referral and Identification of Students



Counselling Support Procedures

Identification

Students who need counselling support are identified in a number of ways, including:

- Teacher recommendation
- Parent recommendation
- Learning support teacher recommendation
- Student self-advocacy
- Recommendation from a mental health professional who has worked, or is currently working with the student

The reason for counseling support may be academic, social, emotional, and/or behavioural. In any case, parent permission is needed for continuous counseling services.

In-school Support Procedures

The school psychologist works with students individually and/or in small group settings to reach their academic, social, emotional, and/or behavioural goals. The frequency with which the school psychologist meets to work with individual students varies. The psychologist may meet with students weekly, monthly, as needed, or as indicated on an IP. In severe cases, outside counselling services may be brought in to support students. When determining topics for group sessions, the psychologist creates surveys so students can give input as to the areas in which they need support. Group sessions are based on these requests and any needs that arise throughout the year.

Students with Medical or Health issues

Identification

Annually, the first aid officer for student health collects forms to identify students who have a health concern or medical diagnosis. The first aid officer will then look into the situation and communicate the concern with the student and his/her family, possibly recommending a visit to a medical practitioner for diagnosis of the issue and treatment options.

Support systems

The first aid officer checks in periodically with each student who has a medical/ health issue to discuss his/her medical treatment and progress, as well as any related questions he/she may have. In addition, the first aid officer talks with the student to determine the impact of his/her medical/ health issues may be having on his/her academic, social, emotional, and/or behavioural goals.

High Achieving or Gifted Students

Identification

High achieving or gifted students are identified through a combination of standardised test scores (NAPLAN, ICAS), subject-specific formative and summative assessments results, and teacher recommendation.

Support systems

Support for high achieving or gifted students may be provided through recommendations from the learning support teacher or individual classroom teachers. Support for these students can take several forms:

- differentiated tasks, such as individualised projects, to provide students with appropriately challenging and rigorous tasks
- advancement of subjects
- streamed classes in MYP/DP Group 1 and 5 subjects

Communication of the SEN/Inclusion Policy to the AZC Community

The SEN/ Inclusion Policy is shared with staff, families, and students in a variety of modes of communication. The policy is available on our website in written English form. Staff members learn about the SEN/ Inclusion Policy during specific collaboration times set aside for policy study. We have an informational session at the beginning of each year. It is anticipated that Inclusion Policy will be translated into Arabic and placed on our website. This will allow our SEN/ Inclusion Policy to be accessed by all families, including those who are not proficient in English.

Review process

Every three years, a committee will be formed to examine the inclusion practices for SEN students, at which time this policy will undergo a complete review. The committee will include, but is not limited to, a representative from the English language faculty, a representative from the general staff, and the IB MYP/DP Coordinator. The purpose of the committee will be to review the current document to ensure its accuracy and to provide continued support to meet the needs of all of our learners. Our first full review took place during the 2019 school year. If needs arise in the years between formal reviews, a committee can be formed to make amendments to the policy. The implementation of the SEN/ Inclusion Policy, in all MYP/DP classrooms at AZC, will be reviewed by the MYP/DP Pedagogical Leadership Team (which consists of the Headmaster, the Grade Mentor and the IB MYP/DP Coordinator), as part of the teacher observation process.

References

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- AZC Assessment Policy (2022)
- Boyle, C., Anderson, J (2020) The justification for inclusive education in Australia. *Prospects* 49, 203–217. Retrieved <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09494-x>
- IB Access and Inclusion Policy
- IB Continuum: Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes (2016)
- IB (2010) Learning Diversity / Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes.
- IB MYP/DP Principles into Practice (2017)
- IB Programme Standards and Practices (2020)
- IB Subject Guides
- NESAs Syllabus Guides (Stages 5 and 6)
- What is an IB Education? (2017)