

## **EAGLE PEAK MONTESSORI SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Like all charter schools, the school shall also retain the right to pursue becoming an independent local education agency (LEA) pursuant to Education Code Section 47641(a), and the District shall not hinder or otherwise impede the efforts of the school to do so. In the event that the school opts not to establish independent LEA status, it shall remain an arm of the district for special education purposes as required by Education Code Section 47641(b), and shall continue to receive funding and services pursuant to the terms of this section and any related annual agreements.

### **Serving the Special Needs Child in the Montessori Environment**

Montessori Education at its core, utilizes components of Response to Intervention (RTI) when working with our population as a whole. Therefore, as a natural part of our model we incorporate these instructional strategies with our special needs population. Students in a Montessori classroom receive individualized work as appropriate. Students are met at their current level for each of the core subject areas. Montessori teachers are trained to continually cycle through the process of observation, implementation, assessment and evaluation. When appropriate, they re-teach concepts as needed. As stated in the description of our curriculum, our classrooms are all multi-age learning environments. This provides opportunities for peer instruction and for homogeneous grouping when necessary. Lessons in a Montessori classroom are given in a direct instruction model with follow up work for the students. Each individual's instructional level is taken into consideration.

One of the tenets of the Montessori approach is to integrate special needs children (both gifted and challenged) into the learning environment. Contemporary "mainstreaming" is in agreement with the Montessori approach, which places emphasis on the benefits gained through including children of different abilities and learning styles in the same environment. Anecdotal data supports the assertion that children who have early Montessori training are more likely to have their exceptional gifts and challenges identified and an environment for nurturing these gifts and challenges provided.

Montessori teachers are equipped to deal with exceptional children in the context of the classroom flow. The Montessori approach focuses on the individual learner and provides a carefully prepared environment which allows children to learn and progress at their own rate and according to their own capacities. As such, it makes working with exceptional learners something that can be addressed within the normal classroom agenda. This makes the Montessori approach ideal for educating with the "special child" because in fact all children are special and are taught accordingly.

Finally, the manipulative and other materials are specially designed to support the many different learning styles and levels of students. The regular use of the materials is designed to encourage participatory learning that is multi-dimensional (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, as well as cognitive).

When a child continues to struggle despite the interventions listed above, Eagle Peak conducts a Student Study Team meeting. When the SST determines that further information is needed, diagnostic testing is completed. The testing process allows the school personnel to identify any child who may need the development of an Individual Education Plan. The requirements of the IEP are then followed through a special education provider and the general education teacher.

As a public school, Eagle Peak Montessori School has an important obligation to serve students with exceptional needs. Eagle Peak will adhere to all laws and/or consent decrees, as applicable, affecting individuals with exceptional needs, including all provisions of the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), its amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Office for Civil Rights mandates, and AB 602. All students will be given equal access to the school regardless of disabilities, and Eagle Peak will not discriminate against any student nor deny admissions to any student based on his/her disabilities. All enrolled students with disabilities will be accorded a Free, Appropriate Public Education.

Eagle Peak Montessori School currently functions as a "public school of the District" for purposes of Education Code section 47646 and IDEA. Pursuant to Education Code Section 47646(b), the District shall provide the school

with services reasonably necessary to ensure that all students with exceptional needs who attend the school are provided a free and appropriate education.

Eagle Peak Montessori School and the MDUSD shall annually and in good faith negotiate and enter into a written agreement to identify the specific desired mix of special education funding and services to be provided. This memorandum of understanding will detail the roles and responsibilities of the school and of the District with respect to referral, assessment, instruction and due process, allocation of actual and excess costs and the charter's fair share of any encroachment on general funds. The school shall enjoy reasonable flexibility to decide whether to receive services, funding, or some combination of both pursuant to Education Code Section 47646(b). The school understands that it is required to contribute an equitable share of its charter block grant funding to support District-wide special education instruction and service costs.

Eagle Peak Montessori School will comply with District policy and practice with respect to the provision of special education and related services. Eagle Peak and the MDUSD will work collaboratively to implement special education services in a manner that provides coherence with the school's broader educational program.

Eagle Peak Montessori School utilizes a "student success team" (SST) model to strategize ways to meet student needs within the regular instructional setting. Students who are not demonstrating success in academic classes will be referred to the SST process. The team will implement and monitor the success of varied strategies within the general education setting before initiating special education assessment.

Eagle Peak Montessori School will participate actively and as appropriate in planning and conducting the IEP team meetings and processes. The school will implement all special education and related services called for by the IEP in partnership with the MDUSD.

A copy of each IEP shall be maintained at the school site. All IEPs are maintained in accordance with state and federal student record confidentiality laws.

In the event of a due process claim to enforce provisions of applicable special education law, Eagle Peak Montessori School is committed to working in cooperation with the District to the maximum extent permitted under law to respond to and defend the school and the District in the process, as a "public school of the local education agency that granted the charter" for purposes of providing special education and related services pursuant to Education Code Section 47641(b).

Eagle Peak administration understands that some of its students may have exceptional needs that are not governed by the terms of the federal special education law (IDEA) but who may require accommodations or services pursuant to the terms of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Eagle Peak administration understands that the school will be responsible for planning and implementing any such accommodations or services.