

## 1. PURPOSE

This Special Education Policy (the “Policy”) sets out the principles underlying Fraser Academy’s delivery of special education.

This Policy was developed in accordance with the Ministry’s *Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines*, which guides the delivery of special education services in B.C.’s schools.

## 2. PHILOSOPHY

Fraser Academy is committed to educating and empowering students with dyslexia and other language-based learning differences (Students with a Ministry of Education ‘Q’ designation).

Our vision is “Changing Destiny by Changing Minds.” Our mission is to celebrate the unique strengths of individuals with dyslexia and other language-based learning differences, empowering children and youth with choice and opportunity.

We believe in the value of Personalized Learning, as embodied through the acronym **RAISE**:

- **R**esilience: Having the courage to persevere
- **A**cceptance: Demonstrating respect, empathy and openness in our community
- **I**nnovation: In teaching and learning
- **S**elf-Reliance: Utilizing personal strengths and resources to become independent
- **E**xcellence: In delivery and standards

## 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The preamble to the *Independent School Act* states that the purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to become literate, to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

This Policy is guided by the Ministry’s *Special Education Policy Statement*: “All students should have equitable access to learning, opportunities for achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs.” This enables students with special needs to have equitable access to learning and opportunities to pursue and achieve the goals of their educational programs.

Additionally, this Policy is guided by the following Ministerial Orders:

- Support Services for Schools Order M149/89, which requires school boards to provide specialized support and health services to students;
- Special Needs Students Order M150/89, which defines a “student with special needs” as “a student who has a disability of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural nature, has a learning disability or has

exceptional gifts or talents.” Order M150/89 also describes the obligation of school boards to consult with parents in the placement of students with special needs and policy regarding student integration;

- Student Progress Report Order M191/94, which describes progress reporting requirements for students with special needs; and
- Individual Education Plan Order M638/95, which requires school boards to design and implement individual education plans for students with special needs.

This Policy is also guided by the *B.C. Human Rights Code*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, particularly articles 3 (General principles), 7 (Children with disabilities), 9 (Accessibility), 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information) and 24 (Education).

#### 4. LEARNING PROGRAMS

Fraser Academy’s learning programs are designed to help students with language-based learning differences (Q designation) become successful, independent learners. Every student enrolled has the intellectual capacity to complete the Dogwood Diploma Program; therefore, the Evergreen Program is not provided. **Fraser Academy only provides moderate intervention special education services to students with unrealized academic potential who have been identified with dyslexia or other language-based learning disorders (problems with the acquisition of reading and/or written language, and sometimes math) as their primary learning challenge, and who are suited to Fraser Academy’s program and learning environment.**

Fraser Academy is fully accredited by the Ministry of Education. All students follow a core curriculum along with Individualized Education Plans. All program features are incorporated into the daily schedule to ensure that students never miss out on learning opportunities in the classroom. **The Core Curriculum is delivered at the grade-appropriate level adapted to the needs of each student, but no modified programs are offered.**

It is the School’s expectation that any prior behaviour issues resulting from the learning disability will dissipate in the context of effective remediation of core language weaknesses. Should a behaviour difficulty or conduct disorder persist beyond a reasonable duration of one-two years, then student progress will be evaluated to determine continued suitability for the program.

Comorbid conditions may occur and include designations such as F, D, or H. In such instances, additional supports and interventions (Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Physiotherapy, etc.) not available at the school may be accessible after school hours and receive designated funding through the School. Where such comorbid conditions occur, the student’s learning disorder must remain their primary area of concern so that the School’s regular programming can continue to be delivered to meet their learning needs, and without the comorbidity negatively impacting the learning of others. Social and emotional learning is embedded throughout our programming. Additional social skills training is tackled on an individual basis through our counselling team.

Fraser Academy does not have the resources, expertise or specially tailored programs to support a primary diagnosis or challenge that would otherwise impact the student’s language acquisition, such as a behaviour conduct disorder, autism spectrum disorder, or overall low cognitive function. In order to foster responsibility and independence, Fraser Academy does not provide one-to-one aides in the classroom. Fraser Academy is not wheelchair accessible and so

cannot accommodate students with a disability requiring the same. Students who have mobility difficulties may use the school elevator but must be able to climb and descend one flight of ten stairs.

Fraser Academy will provide the standard supports, intervention and accommodations (see section 4b) available at the school for students with the comorbid condition of being twice exceptional (P designation). In these cases the primary therapeutic focus will be on closing the gap between the students intellectual capacity and their academic performance.

### (a) Three School Divisions

Our learning program is divided into three school divisions: Junior School (Grades 1-6), Middle School (Grades 7-9) and Senior School (Grades 10-12). Throughout each stage, language skill development, executive function and remediation of language deficits remain a primary focus.

We work with each student to build core skills in a systematic, sequential, cognitive, direct, multi-sensory and flexible manner. By breaking down language to its smallest possible units, students are able to build the skills needed to become proficient readers and writers. In Middle and Senior School years, the Orton-Gillingham (OG) approach provides the foundation for further development of writing skills, reading comprehension strategies, critical thinking, executive functioning skills, and other language skills.

Our Junior School focus is on breaking the code of language. The program is centered on the development of reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary and numeracy. The learning environment offers small class sizes of ten students or less.

Our Middle School focus is on developing and solidifying literacy and numeracy skills. Personalized skills development, health and career education, and executive function coaching are features of this program. Class size is a maximum of ten students. Students are encouraged to develop their talents and abilities across disciplines from academics to fine and applied arts.

Our graduation program provides students with the preparation to succeed as self-advocates and independent learners in the post-secondary arena of their choice. Class size is a maximum of 12 students (on average, seven students) in the Senior School. Our goal is to teach and encourage Senior School students to lead with their strengths, and to do so with confidence. We prepare our students to advocate capably for their own learning differences.

### (b) Student support

Our learning programs support student development in the following ways:

- **Small Classes:** Classes are deliberately small, with no more than 10 students in the Junior and Middle School, and an average of seven students in Senior School classes. Our overall student to faculty ratio is 3:1. This allows individual engagement in all classroom settings. Fraser Academy does not provide Educational Assistants in the classroom setting.
- **One-to-One or Small Group Orton-Gillingham Language Instruction:** All of our students receive individualized, diagnostic and prescriptive language instruction with an Orton-Gillingham (OG) learning specialist. OG is a proven, research-based individualized approach of teaching language skills. The uniqueness of this approach is in meeting the student at their level of success and providing flexible progression to match each student's individual needs.

- **School-Wide Executive Function Curriculum:** Executive functioning skills, such as time management, personal organization, disciplined study habits, research skills and self-advocacy are taught explicitly and reinforced everyday. This school-wide curriculum is a valuable component for assisting students to become successful, independent learners.
- **Firm Support Structure:** Our well-supported learning environments helps students to learn more effectively and to develop positive study habits. Students are taught organizational skills and how to communicate through the use of technology, while maintaining a consistent daily schedule. Teacher expectations are clear and steadily reinforced. All teachers, learning specialists, and tutors closely monitor progress so that students are always working to the best of their abilities.
- **Interactive Classrooms:** Our interactive classrooms enhance learning success, which mitigates learning differences.
- **Adapted Curriculum Leading to Graduation:** Students are required to complete the work assigned such that they are able to progress in grade appropriate curriculum. We offer flexibility that enables students to demonstrate knowledge and talents in alternate ways while building the skills required to achieve success in a post-secondary institution.
- **Multisensory Learning Approach:** Our expert teachers, tutors and learning specialists employ multisensory teaching techniques on an individual level in all classroom settings. We place emphasis on language development, self-compassion and self-advocacy.
- **Shared Schedules:** Students in the same grade have the same schedules—from core and enriched curricula to daily one-to-one tutoring; they are never pulled out of class to go to a “resource” room; as a result, students don’t feel stigmatized.
- **Technology:** All students use technology that supports learning independence, with all students in Grades 7-12 using a 1:1 model of technology with their choice of laptop, and all students in Grades 1-6 using school provided class sets of Chromebooks, as well as iPads to build digital skills, access information, and learn to communicate and collaborate. These tools help provide a multi-sensory experience, enhance skills, and buffer areas where students may need help.
- **School-Wide Accommodations:** Each student can take advantage of school-wide accommodations available to all students. These include: extra time for quizzes, tests and assignments, exams and term projects. Specifically during exams, students can have the use of a computer, a separate setting, and extra time. Other accommodations such as a reader or scribe are available on a case by case basis.
- **Experienced Teaching Principles and Practices:** Our teaching practices are based on over 30 years of frontline experience and influenced by the latest research on human intelligence, cognitive development, dyslexia and learning disabilities. The school uses the Orton-Gillingham approach for instruction along with Educational Therapy and mediation.
- **Specialist Faculty:** We have specialists in all subject areas, including fine arts, applied arts and physical education. Our teachers personalize workloads and assignments so that students achieve success. All our learning specialists and tutors are trained and mentored in the Orton-Gillingham (OG) approach as well as other research-based methods of teaching. Extensive professional development is provided to all faculty.

### **(c) Individual Education Plans**

An Individual Education Plan (“IEP”) is a documented plan developed for each student that describes individualized goals, adaptations, accommodations, other services to be provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement.

All IEPs are overseen by a team who collectively support faculty in goal writing and the assessment process. Members of the IEP team mentor faculty through this process and are available to advise faculty and parents.

Each IEP is developed initially from the student’s psychoeducational assessment, and through a collaborative process, whereby all teachers and learning specialists who work with a particular student contribute to the IEP. The IEP team determines who writes and monitors each students’ goals based on the priority goal areas, outlined in their diagnostic report.

Accommodations may include:

- direct remedial, corrective, tutorial and skill-building instruction;
- adapted or supplementary curriculum and materials;
- alternate instructional and/or evaluation strategies, including adjudicated provincial assessments;
- use of equipment, including computer and audiovisual technology;
- social emotional learning;
- instruction and practice of self advocacy skills;
- learning strategies instruction; and
- outside support based on the needs to students with designations other than Q.

Parents have a formal opportunity to contribute to a child’s IEP twice each year, and are welcome to contact or meet with school personnel to request changes to the plan at any time.

To inform an IEP, the school requires an updated psychoeducational assessment be provided at the family’s expense every five years or, in the event a student is not prospering, as requested by the School. In the event of a change in diagnosis or development of a comorbid condition, the School reserves the right to re-evaluate a student’s enrollment based on the student’s ability to respond to the Fraser Academy program. Up to date reports for students with designations other than Q must also be provided as requested by the School.

## **5. EVALUATION AND REPORTING**

Our School uses standards-based assessment that aligns with the BC curriculum. Evaluations are consistent with the accommodations provided in the IEP and with Ministry reporting policies. Fraser Academy provides ongoing formative assessment that supports skill building within the curricular content and competencies, culminating in summative assessments.

Teachers and Learning Specialists provide both written and verbal assessment for students throughout the year, and

written progress reports are provided to parents two times per year. Parents are welcome to make an appointment anytime to review their child's progress. Fraser Academy includes specific comments on students' performance, as well as a summative measure based on a proficiency scale for Grades 1-9, and letter grades and percentages for Grades 10-12.

## **6. APPEAL PROCESS**

The Fraser Academy Appeals Process applies to this policy.

## **7. STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND COMMUNITY STANDARDS**

Full day attendance is expected of all students. If this is not possible (for example, due to a medical condition), an attendance plan will be developed.

All students attend Fraser Academy with the purpose of maximizing learning. In the event a student repeatedly disrupts the learning environment such that their conduct consistently impacts the learning of others, they may be removed from the program. For further information, please refer to *Fraser Academy Community Standards*.

## **8. HOME BASED LEARNING**

In the event that a student is unable to attend school regularly due to a diagnosed medical condition or communicable disease, school personnel will take reasonable steps to ensure the student is learning at home to gain the desired learning outcomes.

Students eligible for homebound services include:

- students who are absent from school for medical reasons such as injury, disease, surgery, pregnancy, psychological reasons, etc.; and
- students suspended by the School under the Independent School Act.

The student will be assigned a Case Leader who will communicate with the student, parents, faculty and service providers.

- The Case Leader will be responsible for the coordination and delivery of services to ensure successful program completion on an agreed upon timeline.
- Parents are responsible to ensure in-home supervision is in place to support student learning.

If, for any reason, a student is not responding to the program or is unable to successfully complete the program on the agreed upon timeline, the School reserves the right to review continued enrollment in the program.