**Morris Brandon Elementary School Mission, Vision, and Values Statements (2020)**

It is the MISSION of Morris Brandon Elementary to develop students’ academic, social, and emotional needs by engaging our entire school community to work collaboratively while fostering international-mindedness and a love for learning.

It is the VISION of Morris Brandon Elementary School to educate the whole child by teaching empathy, open-mindedness, compassion, and critical thinking while giving every student what they need to be successful lifelong learners.

At Morris Brandon Elementary, we value:

* The whole child.
* Our entire global community – students, parents, staff, community members, business partners, and people outside our community.
* Inquiry, creativity, critical thinking and innovation.
* Learning through play.
* The unique perspectives of others.
* Empathy toward other peoples and cultures, and our environment.

**Atlanta Public Schools Policies for Inclusive Education**

**Gifted Education**

“The Atlanta Board of Education recognizes the need to provide gifted education services to students who have the potential for exceptional academic achievement in grades K-12. The superintendent shall provide programs for gifted students who demonstrate a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability, exhibit an exceptionally high level of motivation, and/or excel in specific academic fields.” (Atlanta Public Schools, IDD, 2013).

**Special Education Programs**

Pursuant with Official Code of Georgia Annotated (OCGA), §20-2-152 (2019), “[s]pecial education shall include children who are classified as intellectually gifted, mentally disabled, behavior disordered, specific learning disabled, orthopedically disabled, other health impaired, hearing impaired, speech-language disordered, visually impaired, severely emotionally disturbed, and deaf-blind and who have any other areas of special needs which may be identified.”

**English Learner Students**

“The Atlanta Board of Education will provide a program for students who are English learners (ELs) The purpose of this program will be to help EL students develop proficiency in the English language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, so that they may be integrated into regular classrooms as quickly as possible. The Atlanta Public Schools English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program shall operate based on the rules and requirements of the GA Board of Education and GA Department of Education.” (Atlanta Public Schools, IDDG, 2013).

**International Baccalaureate (IB) Philosophy of Student Learning Diversity**

“Categorizing and labelling students does not provide sound indicators of a student’s potential or appropriate teaching strategies…In line with the IB’s commitment to inclusive education, students are considered in terms of their strengths. The IB has moved away from the use of deficit labels to identify students and instead considers the areas of challenge that a student may experience.” (IBO, 2019)

**Morris Brandon Elementary School Philosophy of Special Education Needs**

We believe that all learners have unique needs to consider when helping them to meet and exceed their academic and social potentials. We view inclusion as an ongoing process to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers. We continue to evaluate this by living our mission, vision, and values statements that emphasize giving every student what they need to be successful through a culture of empathy, collaboration, mutual respect, and support.

All students are welcome at Morris Brandon Elementary and we do not exclude on the grounds of strengths, challenges, age, social status, economic status, language, gender, race, or ethnicity.

**School Organization and Resources**

The instructional and leadership staff of Morris Brandon Elementary are actively involved in developing effective strategies to increase access and participation. At every chance possible, students are scheduled to be part of their homeroom classes to contribute to the learning community.

Students who receive special education services are served in accordance to IDEA in the least restrictive environment (LRE) so that students of all strengths may interact and contribute to the learning community as much as possible; however, arrangements are made for a small group or 1-on-1 resource environment if a student’s individual education plan (IEP) team determines that such placement is most appropriate for that child.

Students identified as gifted remain in the homeroom setting in grades 1-4 with additional gifted support provided throughout the day. Grade 5 will continue to operate on a pull-out model until the start of the 2021 school year as part of the 2015 action plan to phase out the pull-out model and certify each homeroom teacher as a gifted educator.

English Learners who require ESOL are taught in a co-taught environment so that students of all strengths may interact and contribute to the learning community; however, for students whose English language acquisition is too low to adequately meet their needs in the homeroom inclusive setting, pull-out services are scheduled to increase their English acquisition in a small group environment.

To ensure that barriers to inclusive learning are reduced, the Principal and Head of School allocate adequate human and capital resources to support inclusion, plans for flexible school routines, and provides time for weekly collaborative planning between homeroom, gifted, special education, and ESOL personnel about how to best support all students.

**Cultures and Policies**

All stakeholders, or subgroups of stakeholders, are involved in the revision of school-wide IB policies in order to have voice and ownership over inclusive education at Morris Brandon Elementary School. We also abide by all local and federal statutes as they relate to inclusive education.

**Approaches to Teaching and Learning**

Teachers are formally evaluated in differentiation strategies as part of their annual review (Georgia Teacher Keys Evaluation System *TKES*). Students are continuously assessed formatively and periodically assessed summatively. When a teacher has identified an area of need through formative or summative assessments, the teacher works with students to remediate or accelerate the area where additional instruction is needed during bi-weekly intervention blocks. For students who continue to show difficulties in the learning process, teachers and support personnel engage in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process to provide additional academic and behavioral supports. We also provide an Early Intervention Program (EIP) for students struggling in an academic or behavioral area but do not yet qualify for special education services.

During common planning times, teachers continue to reflect and revise Units of Inquiry in order to address what students should be able to know, understand, and do, and also exchange ideas about how to best support students who are struggling, or best support students who understand the concepts quicker than others. Teachers are also continuing to find ways to innovate instruction in order to plan instructional tasks that provide more voice, choice, and ownership for students and align to IB approaches to learning.

Any professional development provided at the school level is aimed to develop effective strategies to increase access and participation in the general education setting. Teachers continue to develop their knowledge base of IB approaches to teaching and learning. In recent years, we have put additional emphasis on language by training teachers how to work with struggling readers and offering opportunities to be trained in the Orton-Gillingham methodology. We also offer Dual Language Immersion in Spanish for two classes at each grade level K-4 (grade 5 in 2021) and have added additional time in French for those students who are not part of the DLI program.

**Buildings and Physical Obstacles**

Pursuant to state and federal guidelines, the school property is continually being brought up to code to ensure accessibility to all members of the community. Ramps and elevators exist for members with physical handicaps. Students with physical handicaps are assigned to classrooms on the main level as much as possible so that the barrier of utilizing stairs during an emergency is eliminated.

Our playgrounds are also built with inclusivity in mind. The playgrounds are constructed with a series of ramps and stairs. The play structures also include ramps so students can participate in recess activities with peers. We also have a specialized swing for students whose physical handicaps warrant its use.

**Relationships Among the Community**

Staff who interact with students strive to create affirmative and responsive environments that promote a sense of belonging, safety, and self-worth for every member of the community. Anybody who enters the doors of Morris Brandon Elementary is greeted with a smile and a welcome. The start of each school day includes live-streamed morning announcements and lessons in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL).

The Learner Profile plays a role in promoting an affirmation of identify and empowerment of personal freedom. We continue to involve stakeholders in conversations about innovative ways enhance, embed, and accentuate the attributes of the Learner Profile in the character of our students.

**Special Education Needs Policy Review**

The Special Education Needs Policy will be formally reviewed, as needed, by Morris Brandon Elementary School’s staff and community stakeholders at least once each year in order to adapt to changing best practices, changes to the Primary Years Programme, and changes to the needs of our community. The effectiveness of this policy will be reflected in our assessment data and feedback from stakeholders. We welcome comments and recommendations on this policy at any time.

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