

## 17. Special Education

AISU will serve students of all ability levels. Students and families desiring a learning community that recognizes scholarship, academic achievement, and creativity, while respecting each student as a valued individual of great potential and promise, will find they fit at AISU. The founders of AISU intend to meet each student’s individual needs with ongoing assessment, ability grouping, and Individual Education Plans (IEP), per federal and state law. The school believes these tools will allow students to set and achieve individual goals and be supported in creating their own success.

### Services and Placement

Several elements of the school’s instructional approach are inherent in the design of the school. They are designed to enable the school to more effectively and efficiently respond to diverse demands and help accelerate the learning of lower achieving students. These include:

1. Computerized-Adaptive Learning. AISU’s HOPE learning system will integrate a variety of instructional technologies designed to personalize instruction and optimize learning. We will make use of the best tools available—products that are marketed by various service providers, open source offerings, and our own proprietary system. For many years, computerized-adaptive tests such as the NWEA MAP have been used to efficiently and accurately assess student performance. Such computerized testing systems adjust questions based on previous responses.

The evolution of analytics engines integrated into learning management systems will now allow this same basic approach to be applied to instruction at very sophisticated levels. Learning systems can adapt challenges embedded in lessons to the appropriate level of difficulty for individual students. Options for developing background knowledge can be presented so as to reflect an individual student’s learning style or preferences. The capacity of computers to individualize and enhance student learning has the potential to transform education. AISU will provide the environment, structure, systems and resources necessary to realize this potential.

2. Cooperative learning. A significant body of research has shown that cooperative learning instructional strategies produce greater academic achievement, enhance self-esteem, and improve relationships between mainstreamed academically handicapped students and normal-progress students. The approach enables all students to experience success and places students in a position in which they more naturally learn from their peers.

3. Hands-on, experiential learning. These types of activities enhance learning for all students, but they are often particularly helpful for students that struggle with more traditional instructional approaches. Students have greater opportunity to employ their “multiple intelligences” to gain understanding of key concepts. In addition to the work of Howard Gardner, these activities are supported by research in the cognitive sciences.

4. High expectations. All students will be expected to set and achieve challenging academic goals designed to accelerate their learning. Progress will be charted in their student portfolios.
5. Tutoring assistance. The school will seek parent/community and student volunteers to provide tutoring before, during, and after school. Peer Tutoring with school student leaders will also be accessible for those needing extra assistance or extended learning time. Peer tutoring will also enhance the social well being of those involved in the Special Education program.

AISU feels an obligation to ensure that each student is treated as an individual, with special gifts and needs. Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with disabilities in order to ensure access to all activities.

### **Delivery of Special Education Services**

#### 1. Continuum of Services

AISU will provide a Continuum of Services, including Alternative Placements, as necessary to meet the needs of students who qualify for IEPs or 504 plans. The services will be provided consistent with the principles of Least Restrictive Environment, with most students able to be served in such a manner that they are not removed from regular school activities. AISU will utilize a combination of the school's full-time special education staff as well as outside service providers, and may facilitate off-site placements when appropriate—including home-based study with supportive services, or placement at other institutions. Levels of support will include in-class/indirect support, pull out/direct support, and special placement in either on-site or off-site programs self-contained settings (on a short-term or long-term basis).

#### 2. Resources

AISU will employ a team of special educators with cross-categorical certifications with sufficient size and breadth to meet the special education needs for the vast majority of AISU's special needs students, including one special educator with at least five years experience who will serve as the special education director. AISU will also contract for outside service providers (e.g., speech therapist, school psychologist) as necessary to complement the school's core cross-categorical special education team. These supplemental services can be contracted through independent service providers. The budget accounts for various services for which may need to be contracted throughout the start up as well as during year one of operation. AISU's special educators or other service providers will conduct training for other staff members to ensure that all faculty and staff involved in a child's education are aware of special needs within the student population, understand their responsibilities in relation to addressing these needs, and are able to provide the necessary services. All members of the instructional staff will also be trained in confidentiality and "child find" procedures implemented to ensure privacy of sensitive information.

### 3. Delivery Model

In compliance with state and federal mandates, the school will provide eligible students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). To assist each student to achieve commensurate with his or her abilities, special education will be offered, including modification of instructional level, content or performance criteria; adaptations to the environment, curriculum, instruction or assessment; and accommodations to allow students to access and demonstrate learning.

The school will use an inclusion model, educating students with special needs along with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. This heterogeneous grouping of students provides greater opportunities for students to learn from and support each other. The school's approach is optimal for differentiating learning activities to address the needs of individual students. However, students qualifying for special education services may be pulled out for one-on-one or small group instruction with a special educator or related service provider. Removal from the regular education environment will occur if the nature or severity of the disability precludes satisfactory achievement, even with the use of supplementary aids and services in the regular classroom. Outsourcing will be utilized as necessary to complement AISU's core cross-categorical special education team.

### 4. Referrals and Evaluations (Student Study Team)

A student study team (SST) will determine levels of need and special education of the child, and will refer the child for needed available special services. The team will consist of the referring staff member and the special educator. Discussions may include special education services, English Language Learners (ELL) programs, retention, gifted services, and any other alternative educational strategies. The CST will meet as needed and the proceedings will be documented. Referring teachers will submit appropriate screening forms and document all previous classroom interventions that are pertinent to the child's placement.

If the CST refers the child for a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation, the school will provide the appropriate PWN and PSN to the parent. The PWN will explain: 1) why the school is proposing to conduct an evaluation; 2) describe what the school proposed or refused to do; 3) what options were considered in the deliberations; 4) why discarded options were rejected; 5) what the evaluation procedures will include; and 6) what other factors were considered in the decision. It will also contain a statement of parent protections under procedural safeguards and sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding their rights. The PSN will provide a thorough explanation of parents' rights and protections for children under special education requirements. If there is to be a formal meeting, the school will send a meeting notice that states the purpose of the meeting, the individuals and their respective positions who will attend the meeting, and the location and time of the meeting.

## 5. Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team/IEP Team

A Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET)/Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and other qualified individuals with knowledge of the child will review all existing data on the child. The team will be comprised of appropriate qualified individuals to include the parent(s), at least one of the child's regular education teachers, the special education teacher, a representative of the school, and individual to interpret the instructional implications of test results, the child (if appropriate), and other persons with relevant knowledge about the child. The team will decide if further data are needed in order to determine if a child is eligible for special education services. If no additional data are needed, the CST will determine eligibility, develop an evaluation report, and provide PWN to document the decisions made by the team. The PSN, which will also be made available to the parent, will review parental rights regarding initial evaluation. A copy of the evaluation report, which will include documentation of the eligibility determination, will be given to the parent.

If additional data are needed, the MET/IEP team may decide that an evaluation plan needs to be designed. PWN will document the decisions made by the team and the PSN will be made available to the parent. The school will secure the parent's permission before conducting the initial evaluation. The parent will be informed of all types of testing instruments to be used. Parental consent will be voluntary and may be revoked at anytime. Revoked consent does not negate an action that has occurred after consent was provided, and the school may consider mediation or due process to pursue the evaluation.

Tests, materials and procedures used for evaluation will be selected and administered so there is no racial or cultural discrimination, and will be given in the child's native language or other system of communication, unless it is not feasible to do so. No single test will be used, and testing will be done in all areas related to the suspected disability that may include health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communication, and motor abilities.

After obtaining consent, the school will conduct the evaluation, and use the information to determine eligibility within sixty calendar days of the parent's signature. The MET/IEP team will conduct the evaluation and use the information to determine eligibility. Based upon the results, the MET/IEP team will determine if the child has one or more of the following disabilities: Autism, emotional disability, hearing impairment, mental retardation (mild, moderate, or severe), multiple disabilities (including severe sensory impairment), orthopedic impairment, specific learning disability, speech/language impairment, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, other health impairments.

## **Qualified Staff**

AISU will employ/contract qualified, licensed personnel with experience in the various aspects of Special Education services delivery including RtI, ability grouping, classroom differentiation, and subject matter acceleration strategies for exceptional children, all in order to deliver and monitor the prescribed program contained in an IEP. The school will provide qualified and

licensed service providers for all required areas including psychologist, speech, OT, and PT for the provision of related services in accordance with a student's IEP or 504. Personnel will work with students, classroom teachers, and parents to identify and develop strategies for meeting the needs of students with diverse learning styles and disabilities.

The school's Special Education personnel will be primarily responsible for providing training to other staff members. However, as needed, training will also be provided by Utah State Office of Education's Special Education among others. Parents will be invited to participate in training sessions when appropriate. Training topics will include: the special education process (including policies and procedures); categories of disability; effective teaching methods and accommodations; record keeping; parent participation; and how to prepare and participate productively in IEP meetings among other things.

## Policies

Policies and procedures relating to special education will be included in a policy manual. This manual will contain all forms, policies and procedures and will be kept in the director's office for review by parents and faculty. What follows are initial policies and procedures to handle the initial phases of setting up a program that does not marginalize or disregard these students.

### 1. IEP Formulation/Special Education Services/Least Restricted Environment

If a child is found eligible for special education services, a team will develop an Individualized Educational Program (IEP). The IEP team will convene within thirty calendar days of eligibility to develop an IEP. No special education services will be provided prior to the development of the IEP. As described above, the team will be comprised of appropriate qualified individuals to include the parent(s), at least one of the child's regular education teachers, a special education teacher, a representative of the school, and individual to interpret the instructional implications of test results, the child (if appropriate), and other persons with relevant knowledge about the child.

The parent will be provided with a meeting notice and a PSN with adequate time to ensure that he/she has the opportunity to attend. The meeting will be scheduled at a time mutually convenient to participants. If the parent chooses not to attend, the school may conduct the meeting without the parent and document its decisions.

An IEP team will make decisions about an educational program for the child, and then document a written record of the decisions. The IEP document will include:

- a. The date of the meeting and documentation of participants;
- b. A statement of the child's present levels of educational performance to include how the child's disability affects progress and involvement in the regular curriculum;
- c. Measurable annual goals to include how they will be evaluated;
- d. Short-term objectives or benchmarks to support each annual goal;

- e. Special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services to be provided;
- f. Program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided;
- g. Projected initiation date, frequency, location and duration of the services and supports;
- h. Explanation of the extent that the child will not participate with non-disabled peers;
- i. Documentation of how the child will participate in state and school-wide assessments or why the child will not participate and how the child will be assessed;
- j. Consideration of communication and assisted technology needs;
- k. Consideration for extended school year services;
- l. Potential harmful effects to the child or quality of services; and
- m. How the child's progress will be reported to parents.

The IEP team will determine the level of service considering the least restrictive environment (LRE). The child will be educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Removal from the regular education environment will occur if the nature or severity of the disability precludes satisfactory achievement in regular education classes even with the use of supplementary aids and services. Gifted services will take place within the regular educational environment with the core instructional staff responsible for addressing the needs of gifted children.

The IEP team will determine educational placement, with the decision based on the service needs established in the IEP. Placement will be considered at least annually. The team will also consider potential harmful effects to the child or quality of services, and document this consideration. PWN will be provided before the IEP is implemented, and PSN will be made available. The parent will receive a copy of the completed IEP. Following the IEP meeting, the report will be maintained in the student's master special education file in a location designated by the director.

Written parental consent will be obtained prior to the child's initial special education placement. If the parent is not at the meeting to determine placement, the school will utilize other methods to allow participation. PWN will be provided reflecting the decisions made regarding placement. The PSN will be made available.

## 2. Accommodations and Modifications in Regular Education Environment

Regular education teachers, the special education teacher, and related service providers will be informed of their responsibilities for services outlined in the IEP. Each will know

the accommodations, modifications, and supports they will be responsible to provide, and will have access to the IEP. The IEP will be implemented as soon as possible. The Special Educator and related service providers will provide training to the regular education instructional staff as needed.

### 3. Written Progress Reports

Upon parental consent, the student will appear on the special education teacher's roster and be placed on the Special Education Census. Written Progress Reports will be submitted four times a year with the same frequency of report cards. The original will be sent to the parent and a copy maintained by the special education teacher in the student's permanent file. The school believes in facilitating and maintaining careful records with the aim of serving each student well.

### 4. Annual Review

The IEP will be reviewed not less than once a year. Any team member may request additional IEP meetings. Prior to each IEP meeting, a written meeting notice with a PSN will be provided to each member, including the parent, with adequate time to ensure participation. During the IEP review, progress toward annual goals will be addressed, along with the results of any reevaluation conducted, and any information from the team members regarding the needs of the child. The LRE will also be reviewed.

Documentation of the annual goals review will be recorded on the original copy of the IEP being reviewed. A revised IEP will be completed not less than once a year.

### 5. Reevaluation

Students qualifying for special education services will be reevaluated every three years to determine continued eligibility for services. If warranted, a reevaluation may take place at any time. The parent will be provided with PWN and PSN informing him/her that a reevaluation will occur. If no formal meeting occurs, a meeting notice with PSN will be sent.

At this reevaluation, the MET/IEP team will review and collect current data on the student. This includes but is not limited to previous evaluations, observations, state and school testing results, progress toward annual goals, and parent information. If no additional data are needed, the parent will be notified of the right to request additional data and PSN will be made available. If the team agrees that continued eligibility is substantiated, further testing may not necessarily occur, unless requested by the parent. A statement of continued eligibility and the basis of that eligibility will be included in a report with a summary of existing data and present levels of educational performance and needs. A statement of additions or modifications to the special education and related services needed to enable the child to meet the annual goals and participate in the general education program will be included. A PWN will be given that states why additional data will not be needed and the basis upon which eligibility was determined. The parent will be informed of the right to an assessment and a PSN will be made available.

If additional data are needed, PWN will be provided explaining the team's decision and a

PSN will be made available. The school will obtain informed consent from the parent prior to gathering additional data. If reasonable attempts to obtain consent have been made and documented, a reevaluation may proceed even if the parent could not be contacted. If the parent refuses consent, mediation or due process may be utilized to pursue the reevaluation. Data will be gathered and the MET/IEP team will determine eligibility for special education and related services. The reevaluation will be completed before the current eligibility expires or with a reasonable time if reevaluation is requested. Sixty calendar days will be considered a reasonable amount of time.

A reevaluation report will be completed including a statement of continued eligibility and the basis for this decision, with a summary of existing data and present levels of educational performance and needs. This statement will also include the additions or modifications to the special education and related services that are needed to enable the child to meet the annual goals and to participate in the general education program. A PWN will be provided documenting the decisions made by the team and a PSN will be made available. A copy of the reevaluation report will be given to the parent.

All documentation as presented in the review and revision of the IEP will continue to be provided as the IEP is reviewed and updated. If the child is dismissed from special education services, the reevaluation report will include documentation of eligibility determination. The report will be maintained in the child's permanent special education file and a copy will be given to the parent. The parent will be notified through PWN and a PSN will be made available.

The special education coordinator on staff will maintain all special education master files, and teachers will maintain their own student files. To ensure confidentiality of sensitive information, all evaluation information and reports will remain secure and no copies will be provided to unauthorized persons. All persons authorized to view the reports will be listed and required to sign the monitoring sheet of the file.

## **Child Find**

All students newly enrolled will have their records reviewed by school personnel. Additional information may be needed and assessments given, to ensure proper placement. As concerns arise, school personnel will consider modifications, accommodations and alternative strategies to assist the student. Parents will be informed within ten school days of the decision to engage in these activities and may be requested to participate. All efforts to assist individual differences will be documented, and results will be maintained in the student's permanent records in a location designated by the director. This process will include the requisite "45-day screening" for each student entering the school.

A parent may also inform the school of concerns regarding his/her child. The parent may request in writing that the school conduct an evaluation of the child's abilities; however, the request will not necessarily obligate the school to conduct an evaluation. If the school determines that a full and individual evaluation is not warranted, the parent will be provided with prior written notice (PWN) and procedural safeguards notice (PSN) in a timely manner. The school will conduct an



evaluation within the mandated guidelines if it suspects that the child has a disability and may be in need of special education and related services. Child Find will also be conducted according to the requirements to do so.

## Special Education Records

If it is determined that a student has one or more of the disabilities listed above, the MET/IEP team will determine if the child requires special education or related services in order to benefit from the educational program. The evaluation report will include, but not be limited to:

1. A review of current evaluations including types of tests and results;
2. Information from the parents including developmental and medical history;
3. Educational history including the reason for referral, current classroom assessments and observations of the student;
4. Determination of whether the child's educational problems are related to limited English proficiency or lack of instruction in reading and math;
5. Documentation of whether the child's educational problems are related to or resulting primarily from reasons of educational disadvantage;
6. Documentation that the child was assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability;
7. Determination of whether the child has a category of disability (as defined by state law);
8. The child's present levels of academic performance and educational needs;
9. Determination of the child's needs for special education and related services;
10. Determination of whether any additions or modifications are needed to allow the child to progress in the general curriculum; and
11. Team findings on eligibility determination.

The school will provide the parent with a PWN to document the decisions made, and the PSN will be made available. The parent will receive a copy of the evaluation report.

The parent will be provided with a meeting notice and a PSN with adequate time to ensure that he/she has the opportunity to attend. The meeting will be scheduled at a time mutually convenient to participants. If the parent chooses not to attend, the school may conduct the meeting without the parent and document its decisions.

1. An IEP team will make decisions about an educational program for the child, and then document a written record of the decisions. The IEP document will include: the date of the meeting and documentation of participants;

2. A statement of the child's present levels of educational performance to include how the child's disability affects progress and involvement in the regular curriculum;
3. Measurable annual goals to include how they will be evaluated;
4. Short-term objectives or benchmarks to support each annual goal;
5. Special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services to be provided;
6. Program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided;
7. Projected initiation date, frequency, location and duration of the services and supports;
8. Explanation of the extent that the child will not participate with non-disabled peers;
9. Documentation of how the child will participate in state and school-wide assessments or why the child will not participate and how the child will be assessed;
10. Consideration of communication and assisted technology needs;
11. Consideration for extended school year services;
12. Potential harmful effects to the child or quality of services; and
13. How the child's progress will be reported to parents.

Written parental consent will be obtained prior to the child's initial special education placement. If the parent is not at the meeting to determine placement, the school will utilize other methods to allow participation. PWN will be provided reflecting the decisions made regarding placement. The PSN will be made available.

Regular education teachers, the special education teacher, and related service providers will be informed of their responsibilities for services outlined in the IEP. Each will know the accommodations, modifications, and supports they will be responsible to provide, and will have access to the IEP. The IEP will be implemented as soon as possible. The Special Educator and related service providers will provide training to the regular education instructional staff as needed.

Upon parental consent, the student will appear on the special education teacher's roster and be placed on the Special Education Census. Written Progress Reports will be submitted four times a year with the same frequency of report cards. The original will be sent to the parent and a copy maintained by the special education teacher in the student's permanent file. The school believes in facilitating and maintaining careful records with the aim of serving each student well.

The IEP will be reviewed not less than once a year. Any team member may request additional IEP meetings. Prior to each IEP meeting, a written meeting notice with a PSN will be provided to each member, including the parent, with adequate time to ensure participation. During the IEP review, progress toward annual goals will be addressed, along with the results of any reevaluation conducted, and any information from the team members regarding the needs of the

child. The LRE will also be reviewed. Documentation of the annual goals review will be recorded on the original copy of the IEP being reviewed. A revised IEP will be completed not less than once a year.

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At this reevaluation, the MET/IEP team will review and collect current data on the student. This includes but is not limited to previous evaluations, observations, state and school testing results, progress toward annual goals, and parent information. If no additional data are needed, the parent will be notified of the right to request additional data and PSN will be made available. If the team agrees that continued eligibility is substantiated, further testing may not necessarily occur, unless requested by the parent. A statement of continued eligibility and the basis of that eligibility will be included in a report with a summary of existing data and present levels of educational performance and needs. A statement of additions or modifications to the special education and related services needed to enable the child to meet the annual goals and participate in the general education program will be included. A PWN will be given that states why additional data will not be needed and the basis upon which eligibility was determined. The parent will be informed of the right to an assessment and a PSN will be made available.

If additional data are needed, PWN will be provided explaining the team's decision and a PSN will be made available. The school will obtain informed consent from the parent prior to gathering additional data. If reasonable attempts to obtain consent have been made and documented, a reevaluation may proceed even if the parent could not be contacted. If the parent refuses consent, mediation or due process may be utilized to pursue the reevaluation. Data will be gathered and the MET/IEP team will determine eligibility for special education and related services. The reevaluation will be completed before the current eligibility expires or with a reasonable time if reevaluation is requested. Sixty calendar days will be considered a reasonable amount of time.

A reevaluation report will be completed including a statement of continued eligibility and the basis for this decision, with a summary of existing data and present levels of educational performance and needs. This statement will also include the additions or modifications to the special education and related services that are needed to enable the child to meet the annual goals and to participate in the general education program. A PWN will be provided documenting the decisions made by the team and a PSN will be made available. A copy of the reevaluation report will be given to the parent.

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The special education coordinator on staff will maintain all special education master files, and teachers will maintain their own student files. To ensure confidentiality of sensitive information, all evaluation information and reports will remain secure and no copies will be provided to unauthorized persons. All persons authorized to view the reports will be listed and required to sign the monitoring sheet of the file.