Introduction

St Charbel’s College is first and foremost a Maronite Catholic School dedicated to developing in the children a love of God and neighbour, and an abiding attachment to their Maronite faith and heritage. (St Charbel’s College Vision Statement, 1996)

Our mission is for the school to:

Be rich in Lebanese traditions that will help the children to appreciate their history and their past and future glories of the Maronite Church
Be a community in which staff, students and parents are challenged to the life-long invitation of Christ to:

“Come Follow me.” (Matthew 9:9)

St Charbel’s College Learning Support aimed at ensuring access and equality to school, resources and an appropriate education for students with a wide range of abilities and needs including Special Needs, ESL and Talented & Gifted. The College aims to facilitate effective learning for all students. It will do so by engaging the expertise of staff, parents, external agencies, paramedical and medical specialists, in a manner that is collaborative and dynamic. This policy will provide guidelines for staff on processes relating to identification, goal setting (including post –school options), programming, teaching, monitoring and evaluation. Through the provision of information, the policy aims to empower stakeholders as advocates for all students regardless of ability, experiences and needs and their families, ensuring we continue to promoting education in a discrimination-free environment.

Students with disability can be defined as those students classified as having one or more cognitive, sensory, behavioural limitations that are likely to impair learning. Such impairments may include issues of mobility and physical and curriculum access. Students and stakeholders may require use of adaptive technology.

Gifted and talented students’ educational needs are different from other learners and St Charbel’s College aims to provide a basis for focussed pedagogy for these students.

The College adopts definitions of giftedness and talent based on Gagne’s (2003) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT). Gifted students are those whose potential is distinctly above average in one or more of the following domains of human ability: intellectual, creative, social and physical.
Learning Support Policy

Talented students are those whose skills are distinctly above average in one or more areas of human performance.

Student and family rights to privacy are supported.

Rationale

The staff at St Charbel’s College believes that all students at the College:

- Have gifts and talents and are able to learn.
- Have a right to an education in the least restrictive environment.
- Are entitled to equity of appropriate learning and access to appropriate curriculum.
- Will be encouraged to develop their spiritual, emotional, academic, social and sporting potential, allowing them to lead fulfilling lives in their post school years.
- Have a right to feel safe and comfortable.

Core Beliefs

- Parents are the child’s first teacher and are to be consulted regularly by school personnel.
- Other personnel that can be involved are therapists, doctors and paramedical personnel, counsellors, psychologists, teacher aides.
- All students have a right to attend a mainstream class, learning at appropriate pace, working towards identified goals with the assistance of the classroom teacher, parents and members of the Learning Support team.
- Outcomes and course content need to be adjusted to meet the identified needs of the student. Assessments and reporting will reflect the adjusted outcomes the student is working towards.
- In addition to assessment measures forming a basis for reporting, its primary purpose is to determine programming direction and appropriate objectives and interventions.
- Social interactions, friendships and social skills development are encouraged.
- The importance of communication and self-help skills.
- Regular two-way communication with stakeholders is imperative in developing joint goals between mainstream and special needs.
- Learning and teaching practice that differentiates the curriculum is necessary to support all students.
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- Teachers at St Charbel’s College need to have a shared responsibility for the whole spectrum of students’ learning needs. This is not just the province of Learning Support Teachers.

- Developing an understanding that student labelling may not embrace their full potential.

Privacy

St Charbel’s College recognises the Privacy Act, and endeavours to take responsibility for the manner in which information is collect, stored and accessed by its employees. In keeping with the Privacy Act, the Learning Support Department (LSD) has constructed the following outline for staff working with students with a disability, their families and their student records.

- Written parental permission sought to begin investigating student learning needs, outlining how any information collected will be stored and accessed, by whom and the level of access.

- Parental permission sought on the use of student information with College staff and professionals representing external agencies.

- Restrictions in the verbal transfer of confidential student information such as performance on psychometric assessment as measured by a score. Discussions should concentrate on strategy implementation, content adjustment, delivery, assessment and timeline for evaluation.

- Written parental consent required by College staff to contact any relevant educational, medical or paramedical agency including Specialist Doctors, General Practitioners, Occupational Therapist, Community Health Centres, other schools, Speech Language Pathologist, Mental Health Workers.

- Parent requests be respected and treated confidentially and recorded, e.g. relaying events of meeting with parents to wider staff for entertainment purposes.

- The College is dependent on parental disclosure regarding needs of newly enrolled students and further to this require consent to access any relevant records from the previous school/preschool.

- IEPs and funding application. Funding applications and on-line plans are covered by CEC Privacy Guidelines.

Disability Discrimination Act (Dda)

The College recognises the Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 and will through its policies and practices uphold its mandatory requirements. The College staff will ensure that prospective and existing students have access to activities, appropriate curriculum, and support services on the same basis as a student without a disability.
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Students with a disability are often seen as vulnerable and can be the target of school bullies. To minimise such behaviours, preventative measures need to be implemented which allows access for all students. The College will comply with the Education Standards (August, 2005) in areas relating to students being able to inclusively access the curriculum and participate with their peers.

School Refusals and Learners as Reluctant Participants

Students with negative schooling experiences may display reluctance in school attendance. Once such a student with a disability has been identified, a meeting is to be held with all contributors in an attempt to ascertain what challenges are at the core and how they can be redirected and rectified. Possible interventions can include the family phoning the school when the student refuses to attend school. The student will be asked to talk to the LS teacher. Such process should be in collaboration with the student. The student should be able to identify the issue, be satisfied with suggested coping mechanism and set appropriate and manageable goals. Funding applications and online plans are covered by CEC privacy guidelines.

Similarly Gifted and Talented students may underachieve. If students are not working to their potential in school they are underachieving. Underachievement is defined as a discrepancy between a student’s school performance and some index of the student’s natural ability. Many factors may contribute to underachievement through inter-personal or environmental difficulties. Some students may deliberately underachieve for peer acceptance.

Planning

- Identify short term and long term goals with student parents and relevant teachers/ coordinators.
  - Educational
  - Social
  - Transitional
- Plan appropriate adjustments, enrichment or extension as appropriate supplementary to lesson content and assessments.
- Complete online educational plan with all stakeholders.
- Learning support student profile / teacher meetings.
- Ongoing evaluation including meetings at least twice yearly with teachers and parents to review progress and also in the case of specials needs update IEP/s online.
- Fortnightly review meetings with counsellor.
Psychometric assessment repeated every 3 years or ongoing monitoring of students progress as appropriate.

**Planning Individual Support Services**

Once student needs and learning preferences have been determined, an Individual Educational/Transitional Plan needs to be formulated in a collaborative manner. The plans will include short- and long-term goals in appropriate areas for example Communication Educational, Social, Transitional, Sensory, Mobility and Self-Care. The onus is on the Learning Support staff to host the collaborative planning process with the classroom teacher including demonstrations of teaching strategies and curriculum that may foster more appropriate learning experiences for the students. Part of this process is to select outcomes that are suitable to the students learning needs. Learning Support staff provide in and out of class support in all KLAs. Advance planning is crucial to success.

**Ongoing Evaluation of Individual Educational/Transitional Plans**

Once the Individual (Student) Plan has been developed, it needs to be monitored, primarily by the designated plan coordinator. More importantly, the plan coordinator assists the student’s teacher in understanding the student as a learner and provide for on-going curriculum, pedagogy and assessment adjustments.

This role can also involve:

- Communication with the student’s teachers.
- Maintaining and recording informal communication with parents.
- Liaising with coordinators, teachers and school counselor.
- Regularly communicating with the student.
- Monitoring /Reviewing student progress against stated goals.

Collaboratively planning and updating on-line plans and support services with parents, teachers and students each semester incorporating the use of multiple criteria both subjective and objective.

**Life Skills**

A syllabus is available for each Year 7–10 course developed by the Board. Each syllabus contains Life Skills outcomes and content. By satisfactorily undertaking courses based on Life Skills outcomes and content from one or more Years 7–10 Board Developed syllabuses in a key learning area (KLA), students are able to satisfy the mandatory curriculum requirements in individual KLAs. Most students with special education needs will participate fully in learning experiences and assessment activities provided by the regular syllabus outcomes and content, although they may require additional support, including adjustments to teaching and learning activities and/or assessment. However, for a small percentage of
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these students, particularly those with an intellectual disability, the Life Skills outcomes and content in each syllabus can provide a more relevant, accessible and meaningful curriculum option.

A decision to allow a student to undertake Life Skills outcomes and content in one or more Years 7–10 courses is made collaboratively with the student, parents/ caregiver and the school (see Section 3.4). Before deciding that a student should undertake a course based on Life Skills outcomes and content, consideration should be given to other ways of assisting the student to engage with the regular course outcomes. This assistance may include adjustments at school level for course work and/or assessment tasks and/or special provisions for School Certificate tests.

Transition Plans

Transition is important for all students. Planning is to be integrated at all transition stages to support the diverse range of student abilities.

The significant stages are:

- Preschool to Kindergarten
- Years 3 to 4
- Years 6 to 7
- Years 10 to 11 (or post school options, e.g. apprenticeship, TAFE)
- Years 12 to work or study.

- Acceleration (in the case of Gifted students)

St Charbel's College endeavours to facilitate a planned Year 6 to 7 transition process as the College is a K-12 campus.

Work Experience

Students with a disability in Year 9 /10 are encouraged to complete work experience days in addition to the compulsory two weeks at the end of Year 10. The aim is to encourage student confidence and skills to broaden their awareness of expectations and to understand and appreciate what is involved in a particular field.

Students with disability who meet the criteria can access the services of Catholic Education Work Placement Officer after completing a Work Orientation Day which covers occupational health and safety, personal safety and safe working practices.
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Education and training providers can also be accessed to promote further skill development and accreditation such as Green Card, Introduction to Work Skills; driver’s and forklift licence and First Aid.

**Special Provisions**

Special examination provisions are granted to provide students with special examination needs access and equity through practical support. Regardless of the nature of the special need, the provisions granted will be solely determined by the implications of the student’s functioning in an examination situation. Provision is granted for students by principals for school-based assessments. The Board of Studies may approve special examination provisions for the School Certificate Tests and Higher School Certificate Examinations if a student has a special need that would, in a normal examination situation, prevent him or her from:

- Reading the examination questions; and/or

- Communicating his or her responses.

Provisions may include Braille papers, large print papers, use of a writer, use of a reader, extension of test time, rest breaks, use of a personal computer, establishment of a special test centre, exam supervision, individual supervision, permission to take medication, or other provisions as judged appropriate.

**Talented and Gifted Student/s Procedures**

**Identification stages:**

St Charbel’s College endeavours to identify gifted and talented learners should as early as possible. For some children/students giftedness may emerge at a later time and therefore identification processes will be repeated at regular intervals.

The identification process needs to be reliable and defensible. It must be congruent with current research and departmental and site policies.

**Supporting positive social and emotional development**

For some gifted and talented learners, being different from their peers in ability and achievement and/or trying to live up to very high expectations may result in painful sensitivity, depression, loneliness, perfectionism, social isolation or stress. Educators and parents/caregivers can work together to ensure that gifted and talented learners are accepted and valued and have opportunities to interact with peers who have similar interests and abilities.

**Curriculum Differentiation**

A differentiated curriculum caters for a wide range of learning styles, readiness and ability levels within a mainstream class. A differentiated curriculum is necessary for gifted and
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talented learners whose potential is unlikely to develop without special educational provisions.

**ESL and New Arrivals**

St. Charbel's College recognizes that its entire student body is of Non-English Speaking Background and therefore it promotes a student centered approach to instruction. Teachers are provided with opportunities for professional development in ESL strategies both in house and outside the school and they are supported by the ESL teacher.

New Arrival students are assessed upon enrolment for their proficiency in the English Language and for their eligibility to attend Lewisham Intensive Language Centre. The ESL teacher liaises with the centre and keeps informed of the student's progress. School visits are arranged prior to the student's re-entry into St. Charbel's College. Once a student returns to the school, they are supported intensively by the ESL teacher through team teaching in mainstream classes and the provision of withdrawal lessons on a needs basis.

**Staff Roles & Responsibilities**

**Student**
- Extend their learning parameters
- Assume responsibility for their own learning
- Actively seek assistance when required
- Report any discrimination or bullying to learning support staff

**Student’s Parents/Caregivers**
- Appreciate their valued standing as the student’s first teacher.
- Actively participate in their child’s education.
- Communicate desired outcomes and contribute to the development and review of IEP including transition plans (Yr6 – Yr7, acceleration, post-school options).
- Assist in the access of external support agencies when required.
- Keep in regular communication with school contact person.
- Report any discrimination or bullying to a learning support staff.

**Learning Support Coordinator**
- Acting as an advocate for students with learning support needs and their families.
- Promoting inclusive practices in relation to students with learning support needs.
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- Developing and managing strategies for identifying students with learning support needs, being mindful that the students first language may be Arabic and possible presences of social dysfunctional attributes.

- Distributing to teachers relevant and appropriate information about students with learning support needs.

- Coordinating the collaborative development, implementation and evaluation of individual educational programs for ‘targeted’ students with learning support needs.

- Leading and supporting the members of the Learning Support Team (E.S.L Teacher, Learning Support Teacher, Classroom Teachers, Careers Advisor) in developing and evaluating their programs.

- Monitoring the progress of all students with learning support needs, and overseeing the regular reporting to parents.

- Collaborating with Heads of Department (7-12), Curriculum Coordinator (K-6) and teachers to ensure that all students are supported and have access to a relevant and challenging curriculum through assessment, curriculum differentiation, instructional adaptation, appropriate equipment and technology, environmental modifications, behaviour management and social programs.

- Collaborate with the College Librarian regarding resources.

- Leading the Learning Support Team to include relevant stakeholders.

- Providing professional development opportunities to teachers (in conjunction with other members of the Learning Support Team, in order to support them in their inclusion of students with learning support needs.

- Working closely with the Assistant Principals (Welfare), Curriculum Coordinators and members of their teams in the provision of support for students with learning support needs.

- Collaborating in the process of forward planning in curriculum development at a whole-College level.

- Coordinating the documentation of Learning Support curriculum, assessment and reporting policies and procedures.

- Maintaining a core database of students with learning support needs to be used for teaching and administrative purposes.

- Overseeing the development and maintenance of appropriate records of all Learning Support programs and registers.
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- Coordinating all aspects of Special Provisions for eligible students (7-12) in examinations and assessment tasks.

- Working collaboratively with the academic time-tabling committee in relation to the allocation of students to classes and teacher placements.

- Preparing applications for funding within Commonwealth and State programs for students with disability.

- Managing the Learning Support budget, including the authorisation of expenditure.

- Liaising regularly, and working collaboratively with external agencies [in particular the Education Officer – Special Education, Catholic Education Commission (NSW), to enhance the delivery of services to students with learning support needs.

- Liaising with itinerant teachers.

- Collaborating with the Curriculum Coordinators in relation to curriculum administrative and organisational tasks (K-12).

School Counsellor/Psychologist

- Acting as an advocate for students with disability and their families.

- Retest students using appropriate testing tools.

- Facilitate meetings regarding student with disability with all stakeholders.

- Advise College Management/Pastoral Care Team on best practice for students with disability.

- Represent student concerns to Pastoral Care Team, and recommend appropriate alternative procedures.

- Conduct self-help/support sessions, and social skills groups for students.

- Liaise with external agency for access to service provisions for students with disability and their families.

Teaching/Learning Coordinator

- Extend their learning parameters.

- Coordinate necessary provisional structures for the implementation of Life Skills Program.

- Consider the needs of the Learning Support Staff when time-tabling.
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- See also Role Description.

**Learning Support Teachers**

- Act as an advocate for the student with learning support needs.
- Respond to any harassment or bullying of students with learning support needs.
- Primarily lead the collaborative effort to develop, implement and evaluate the IEP.
- Communicate regularly the needs of student to other members of the teaching faculty.
- Provide support to students, their parents and teachers.
- Assist the Learning Support Committee to ensure that appropriate programs and assessment tasks are in place for student.
- Assist with the writing and implementation of specific programs and/or adjustments collaboratively.
- Actively contribute to the benefit of students through participation at the Learning Support Committee.

**Year Care Coordinators**

- Liaising with members of the Learning Support Team regarding pastoral care of students with disability.
- Devising appropriate behaviour response plan for students with disability.
- Implement education and other preventative programs to negate bullying at school.
- Follow up with victims/bullies meetings.
- Collaborating with the school counsellor, parents/care givers on Pastoral Care issues.
- Encouraging students to maximise their positive schooling experiences

**References**

Policy Statement Gifted and Talented Children and Students Policy, South Australia, Dept of Education and Children’s Services, 2010
An Employer’s Guide to Transition Workplace Learning 2005, CEO Sydney
Learning Support Policy