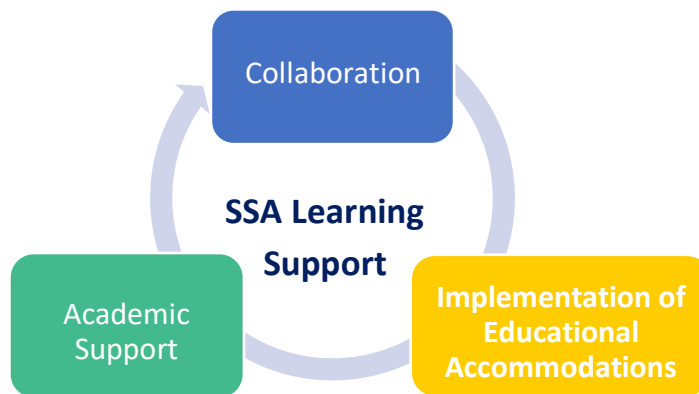




Learning Support
at
Shady Side Academy

Introduction

Shady Side Academy has a tradition of providing all students with a quality education and to achieve this endeavor the Academy recognizes the need to meet the needs of a neurodiverse student population. Our faculty understands the diverse needs of our students, and the individual attention they provide is a hallmark of our Academy. Learning specialists are located on each of our campuses reflecting a commitment to supporting our students, particularly those with learning differences. This ensures that a developmentally appropriate continuum of services is provided to students as they advance through the Academy. Our learning support program consists of three main components: collaboration, implementation of educational accommodations, and academic support.



Collaboration

Collaboration is a vital part of supporting our students' development as learners. As our teachers work closely with students, they are integral in identifying when additional support is needed. The learning specialist serves as a liaison among families, students, teachers, administrators, and outside professionals. Partnering with families enables ongoing communication regarding the evaluation process, student progress, and support provided at school and at home. As students advance through the Academy, their partnership with the learning specialist becomes an integral part of their educational experience.

Collaboration among the learning specialist, teachers, administrators, and outside professionals encourages a shared expertise to develop strategies that best meet the needs of each student. At Shady Side, a culture of learning is strengthened through ongoing professional development that addresses the implementation of best practices in our classrooms. Additionally, the learning specialist is a resource for the faculty and administration to share current research based information on neurodiversity.

Implementation of Educational Accommodations

Students with diagnosed learning differences are required to meet the expectations of our rigorous curriculum. In order for students to receive academic accommodations, a formal diagnosis as part of a psychological, psychoeducational, or neuropsychological evaluation completed by a licensed psychologist or neuropsychologist is required. This completed report must be submitted to the learning specialist and can be kept confidential. In order to continue receiving accommodations, students must be re-evaluated every three years. While all recommendations from outside evaluators are considered, each division's administration and learning specialist will determine which accommodations will be provided on that particular campus. Based upon these determinations, the learning specialist will write an accommodation plan. Shady Side Academy, as an independent school, is not required to modify curriculum, provide dedicated 1:1 personnel for in class instruction, provide assistive technologies, or follow all recommendations in 504 service plans or Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

The following academic accommodations may be provided at Shady Side Academy depending on the division and the needs of the child:

- Extended time on standardized and classroom exams will be given based upon the recommendation of the qualified evaluator, with 50% as the standard. The learning specialist and administrators at a student's division will determine the possible implementation of the recommendation of more than 50% extended time.
- Testing in alternative spaces may be made available.
- Additional testing methods, such as enlarged print, oral testing, or testing with additional breaks, may be provided.
- In the classroom, students may use pre-approved assistive technology devices with the permission of administration and individual faculty. However, Shady Side Academy is not responsible for the purchase or maintenance of any assistive technology devices.
- If the structure of the class permits, advance notes may be given. This will be determined through discussion between the subject teacher and learning specialist.
- Preferential seating, brief breaks, and allowances for appropriate movement in the classroom may be provided when recommended.
- In specific situations, temporary reduction of classroom assignments may be allowed following approval from the school counselor, learning specialist, school nurse, and administration.
- World language exemptions are determined on a case-by-case basis as approved by the head of school in consultation with the learning specialist and head of the language department. Language exemptions are reassessed and reapproved at each division.

Academic Support

As students engage with Shady Side's comprehensive and rigorous curriculum, learning specialists are on each campus for students who need additional support. While the learning specialist can support all students, precedence is given to students with diagnosed learning differences. The support provided to the students aligns with their development as they progress through each division as described below.

The Junior and Country Day Schools

The learning specialists and teachers collaborate to support the development of students with and without identified learning differences. As the students advance through the lower schools, the learning specialists' primary focus is on supporting students in the academic areas of reading, writing, and math. Learning specialists at the lower schools provide academic support and enrichment to meet the needs of the neurodiverse student population. Students are supported in the classroom, in a small group, or in a one-on-one setting. Systematic interventions that incorporate multisensory strategies help students progress toward their learning goals. In partnership with the classroom teachers, the learning specialists also provide strategies to improve students' organization, self-monitoring, and self-advocacy skills, which are critical to their development as learners. For a student with a diagnosed learning difference, an accommodation plan is created by the learning specialist to identify the strategies and conditions needed to help foster the student's success. At the lower schools, the academic and learning skills cultivated help prepare our youngest students with the foundation necessary for their transition to the Middle School.

The Middle School

During the Middle School years, the focus for all students is to become actively engaged in their education and to better understand themselves as learners. The learning specialist, in partnership with classroom teachers, supports student development of study skills, organizational skills, test preparation strategies, and self-advocacy strategies. All sixth grade students attend a year-long study skills class that lays the foundation for skills that are reinforced throughout their Middle School experience. Students are guided toward the acquisition of self-advocacy skills by learning to formulate questions and create meaningful dialogue in order to meet with teachers effectively. The learning specialist also mentors students with accommodation plans in terms of understanding their learning differences, developing particular strategies that can enhance their academic performance, and providing guidance on how to best to utilize their accommodations. At the Middle School, the students' academic and learning skills continue to develop to ensure a smooth transition to the Senior School.

The Senior School

During the Senior School years, students are provided mentorship for increasing their independence, which aids them in utilizing effective academic and planning strategies on this campus, college, and beyond. The learning specialist guides each student to take responsibility for their role as a learner and empowers them to implement strategies to better navigate the demands of the curriculum. As the students mature into young adults, they are supported in their development of appropriate, efficient, and effective self-advocacy skills.

The learning specialist is a resource for the faculty, administration, and students to share current research-based information on learning differences and to assist in the implementation of accommodation plans. The coordination of accommodations with the College Board and the ACT standardized testing organizations is also provided by the learning specialist.