Learning Support Handbook

2018-19

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Inclusion at NIS

Nanjing International School: An inclusive learning community, inspiring international mindedness, personal excellence, creative thinking

Inclusion is a shared school belief about educating all students. Each child is part of the rich diversity of the community.

The true essence of inclusion is based on the belief that students with learning differences should be included in naturally occurring settings and activities with their peers. It is a commitment to educate all children to the maximum extent appropriate in the regular classroom setting.

Personal Excellence: We believe that all students can learn and succeed. At NIS, all of our students are challenged to the best of their ability to achieve personal success. In support of this goal, student self-advocacy is an essential element in helping students know how they learn best and how to articulate their learning needs.

An inclusive classroom is a place where:
1. All students feel valued
2. A student-centered curriculum is taught broadly and deeply
3. Clear and high expectations are upheld for all students
4. Students work in flexible and cooperative groups
5. Clear and fair routines are stated and followed
6. Students and teachers demonstrate open and respectful communication
7. An emotionally and physically safe environment is maintained
8. A variety of materials and equipment are available
9. Instruction and assessment are differentiated
10. Students actively engage in learning
11. Students self-advocate for their learning needs

Inclusion at NIS should look like:
1. Students with a range of learning needs benefit from differentiated instruction.
2. Students working in small groups in the classroom, sometimes with guidance/support with a Learning Support teacher.
3. Classroom teacher and Learning Support teacher, together, teaching all students
4. 1:1 assistants and/or Learning Support teachers supporting students with significant learning needs.
5. Small pullout groups of students working in the Learning Support classroom.
6. Students with cognitive learning needs are included in appropriate classes and activities with adequate support.
7. Teachers incorporate accommodations to help students with mild to moderate learning needs to access the regular curriculum.
8. Modifications to the curriculum are provided for those students with significant learning difficulties or physical disabilities and who may require intensive support.

Inclusion at NIS does not look like:
1. Students with disabilities in regular classrooms with inadequate support
2. Students forced through a curriculum that does not match their individual academic needs
3. Students with a social/emotional disability that would substantially disrupt the learning process at NIS.

Admission of Students with Special Needs

When an application has been submitted, the Admissions Team thoroughly reviews each student's previous school experience and records to make an initial assessment regarding a match between school resources and the student's needs, assuring a reasonable prospect for student success. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

Members of the Admissions Team for students who have special needs normally includes: the Admissions Office, Director, Deputy Director of Learning, Heads of Sections (Primary, Middle, Upper), Learning Support Services team member. Other specialists may be referred to as needed. Human Resources is also consulted should a 1:1 Learning Assistant be needed.

Parental disclosure: In order for us to understand each student's learning profile and to plan appropriate educational opportunities, we ask that parents disclose essential information related to their child's learning at the time of their application. We appreciate open and transparent dialogue that occurs between home and school.

We require specific information when considering a student for admission:
1. a current school report, plus the final school reports from the previous two school years
2. an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or similar Learning Support Plan from the previous school, *in English* (if applicable)
3. a psycho-educational evaluation (if applicable)
4. standardised test scores

In order to protect the student teacher ratio and ensure service of high quality, we offer a limited amount of space for students with special needs. We believe we can effectively manage approximately 10 - 12% of possible (not actual) students with special learning needs per grade level, and up to 10% of possible (not actual) of the school population. We do not accept students with emotional and/or behavioural disorders that may substantially disrupt the learning process.

All LSS information contained in admissions files is confidential and will be shared with discretion and professionalism.

The Admissions Process
1. The Admissions Office collects and compiles complete application documents from the family, previous schools, and any other related organisations or professionals.
2. If there is an indication that the student has special needs, the file is sent to the Head of Section and the relevant LSS teacher for review and discussion.
3. After collection of additional information and/or further discussion, the Head of Section makes a recommendation regarding admission to NIS.
4. The Director makes the final admission decision.

Learning Support Staff

Learning Support Teachers
Students who need and qualify for extra academic support may work with our Learning Support teachers. The Learning Support teachers work in collaboration with Classroom teachers to ensure students have access to the grade level or appropriate curriculum. Learning Support Teachers work directly with students who require additional academic support.

This support may take place in the classroom or in the Learning Support Class. The Learning Support and classroom / subject teachers are responsible for collaborating to ensure accommodations are implemented and to help differentiate instruction for students receiving Learning Support. Learning Support teachers maintain data in order to monitor student progress and to guide teacher instruction. They serve as resources for Classroom teachers and parents, and provide insights related to disabilities and the impact of those disabilities in the classroom.

Learning Support teachers are also responsible for:
1. Providing parents and teachers with effective strategies and interventions related to a student's disability or academic difficulty
2. Assessing student progress
3. Completing necessary paperwork (i.e. report cards, progress reports, Individualised Education Plans, Accommodated Education Plans, putting meeting notes on Veracross) in a timely manner
4. Facilitating meetings about students of concern, Child Study Team meetings, and parent conferences
5. Providing professional development to school faculty

Learning Support Assistants
In specific situations, a student may require the support of a 1:1 Assistant. The 1:1 Assistant *assists* teachers in the delivery of instruction and behavioral supports for an identified student. The 1:1 Assistant works under the direct supervision of the Learning Support and classroom teachers. The ultimate responsibility for the design, implementation, and evaluation of instructional programs, including assessment of student progress, lies with the Classroom and Learning Support teachers. Our Learning Assistants are employed by the school, but paid for by the parents, as such the parents pay for a service, not an individual.

Program Descriptions

Support Model
In the Learning Support Department, we provide tiered levels of support. Students receiving direct services will be placed on a tier.

Types of support provided on campus through NIS**:**
- Consultation for students, teachers, parents
- 1:1 and small group support - push-in or pull-out
- Strategy Instruction class (Grades 6-12)
- Homework club after school
- Strategies Class

Types of support accessible in Nanjing or Shanghai or by agreement on campus at NIS, but charged externally**:**
- Educational psychologists
- Speech & language
- Psychological Therapy
- Occupational Therapy

We work closely with LIH Olivia's Place.

Monitored Students
These students do not receive direct services but may have a diagnosis and/or an AEP. These students are supported through accommodations by classroom teachers.

Entry criteria: See Appendix A.

Tier 1 - Mild support
Students participate in the same curriculum content as his/her peers with the same learning outcomes and they benefit from instruction in the classroom, but may need accommodations to access and demonstrate understanding of the curriculum. Student may receive accommodations, and if so have an Accommodated Education Plan (AEP). Tier 1 students are assessed according to grade level criteria. They are eligible for non-modified transcripts.

Students may receive support in the following ways:
- Consultative support from a learning support specialist: guidance from LSS provided to class teachers to support differentiation of lessons, assessments, homework monitoring, learning performance by LSS and the class teacher
- Class observations by LSS possible
- Assistive technology in class and/or for assessment purposes
- Strategy Instruction LSS course in Grades 6-12
- Time not to exceed 40 – 60 minutes three times/week, including prep time
- Early intervention (Pre-K to K2): based on evidence from grade level common assessment data; support is systematic and focuses on foundation skills; support is normally short-term and frequent; progress is reviewed at the end of a six to eight-week intervention period to determine success of the interventions

Exit criteria: Students are working with expected level of independence at grade level standards for a sustained period of time (at least half a school year) based on common assessments.

Tier 2 - Moderate support

Students participate in the same curriculum content as his/her peers, but requires accommodations and/or some modifications to one or more curriculum areas to access and demonstrate understanding of the curriculum. The focus of instruction may be remedial and aimed at teaching basic skills within the context of the grade level / class curriculum. Students are assessed with grade level criteria unless they are on an IEP with curriculum modifications. Students will have an IEP or an AEP.

Students may receive support in the following ways:
  – Consultative support from a learning support specialist: guidance from LSS provided to class teachers to support differentiation of lessons, assessments, homework
  – Strategy Instruction: LSS course in Grades 6-12
  – Small group instruction, 1:1 support, pull-out sessions
  – Assistive technology: learning and assessments
  – Up to 90 minutes of support three times/week, including prep time

Exit criteria: When students are working to their potential at grade level standard for a sustained period of time for at least half a school year based on school wide assessments or when needs can be met at tier 1.

Tier 3 - Intensive support

Student participates in a modified, or partially modified, program adapted from the grade level curriculum. The student most likely has a 1:1 learning assistant that attends to his/her learning and social, emotional and/or behavioural needs throughout the school day. Students participate in an IEP, requires significant modifications   and are assessed according to individual goals. Student receives a modified transcript at MYP/DP level.

Students may receive support in the following ways:
  – 1:1 Learning Assistant for 50% or more of the school day
  – Modified Program
  – Strategy Instruction including life skills, vocational skills, social skills
  – Small group instruction, 1:1 support, pull-out sessions
  – Assistive technology
  – Facilitation of integration in grade level balanced with life skills, depending on the needs of the student
  – Additional support in social, behavioral, and/or emotional development
  – Often requires additional external support services

Exit criteria: When students are working to their potential at grade level standard for a sustained period of time for at least half a school year based on school wide assessments, or when needs can be met at tier 2.

Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations

An Accommodation Education Plan (AEP) is created for students who need specific accommodations in order to access the curriculum. Changes made to instruction and/or assessment intended to help students fully access the grade level curriculum without changing the student learning outcomes. Accommodations provide equitable instruction and assessment for students by reducing or eliminating the effects of a student's disability. They do not change or reduce the learning expectations in regard to the goal being addressed or assessed. Generally, the resulting student product with accommodations is equal to a student's product without accommodations.

Accommodations may include: (not an exhaustive list)
- Preferred seating
- Extended time for assignments and exams
- Allowed use of assistive technology
- Alternative format for demonstrating understanding of material
- Instructions broken down into sequential steps
- Use of graphic organizers/scaffolds

Modifications

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is created for students with a diagnosed disability who require modifications to the curriculum. Alterations made to instruction and/or assessment change, lower, or reduce grade level learning or assessment expectations. More often than not, the resulting student product is not the same as a student product without modifications. Modification eligibility is a team decision and parent permission must be obtained prior to implementation. Modifications are described in the IEP and documented on the report card/transcript. The IEP is collaboratively created by LSS, teachers, parents, teachers, relevant therapists to ensure a common direction and consistent approaches for the student.

IEPs and AEPs

All students on the LSS caseload (Tier 1, 2, or 3) will have either an AEP or IEP. AEPs and IEPs are written on a common LSS template (MS Word) within six weeks of the student entering LSS, depending on available documentation. If student already has a current and appropriate IEP or equivalent, this will be used until its review date. Signed AEPs and IEPs are shared with the student's teacher(s), head of section and counselor either in person or via email. IEPs are reviewed and re-signed every 6 months. AEPs are reviewed and re-signed every 12 months. IEPs and AEPs are stored on the school server (restricted access) and in the LSS confidential locked filing cabinet.

Tier 1 and 2 students with an Accommodated Education Plan (AEP) will not reference any grade modifications. Students will be assessed in accordance with NIS standards and practices.

Tier 2 and 3 students with an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) which references modifications to student learning outcomes will earn a "P" on their report and transcript indicating that the student was on a modified programme for that area of learning.

Accommodated Education Plan: Students with learning needs who require accommodations should be given the opportunity to receive grades on a report card/transcript. If the AEP does not reference any grade modifications, the assumption is that the student will be graded in accordance with NIS assessment standards and practices. These students are eligible for grades and credit in the same manner as other students when they complete the same courses as other students.

In the Upper School, all documentation regarding the specific learning need will be revised and any accommodation required will be requested to the IBO, College Board or ACT. The external agency will ultimately approve or not any accommodations for external tests and exams. IBO published documents such as "Candidates with assessment access requirements" (2013) along with recommendations in external psycho-educational evaluation inform accommodations in a student's AEP or IEP in the MS and US.

Individual Education Plan: An IEP that references modifications of student learning outcomes. Students will earn a "P" and an asterisk (*) indicating that the student was on a modified programme for one or more subject areas. In some cases the modification will include renaming the course for transcript clarity purposes. Students in Grade 10 who either do not meet the Grade 10 MYP requirements for the *Certificate of Achievement* or who have insufficient credits due to being on a modified programme will earn the *Certificate* of *Completion* at the awards ceremony. Students in Grade 12 who do not meet the requirements for the *NIS High School Diploma* will earn the *NIS High School Certificate* at the awards ceremony.

Behavioural Plans: If a student is receiving Learning Support Services, the LSS case manager is responsible for coordinating the behaviour plan. Students should not be place on an LSS tier if behaviour concerns are the primary reason for interfering with learning, unless they meet the LSS entry criteria.
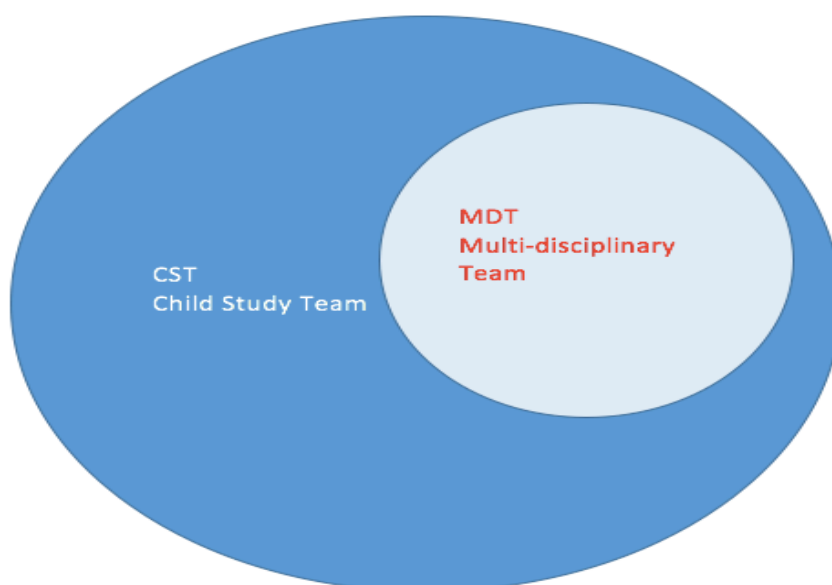
Student Support Team (SST)
The Primary School, Middle School, and Upper School all have an SST meeting once every eight-day cycle to discuss students of concern, LSS referrals, admission so of new students, and any other relevant business. Members of the SST include the Head of Section, LSS teachers, Counselor, and the ELL teacher.

Child Study Team (CST)
The Child Study Team is composed of LSS, grade level teachers, Section Head, Counselor, and any other relevant staff involved in the program of an individual student. The team meets regularly according to the Tuesday meeting schedule and in addition as necessary to consider, plan, and coordinate support for students. The purpose of the CST meetings if for all teachers of a particular student to focus on data collected and to agree upon an action plan.

1. Any teacher, counselor, administrator, or parent can refer a student to the Child Study Team; this needs to be done at least 3 days in advance.
2. Meeting notes are maintained on each child referred to the team. Information includes: specific concern(s), differentiated strategies implemented, and next steps.

3. All information shared during the meetings is confidential.

Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT)

A Multidisciplinary Team consists of internal and external specialists of NIS and the student's primary teacher and TA/LA who work collaboratively to write and implement a student's IEP. A MDT team will most likely be required for a student with co-occurrence or a student with intensive needs (Tier 3). Each specialist on the team will have IEP goal(s).

Note: *A Child Study Team consists of everyone who works with the student*.

Referral Process

"The referral process is the recognition that there **may** be issues surrounding a child's learning that require the **collective** attention of a group of educators (specialists and generalists alike). It is an invitation to professional inquiry about a child's learning and a commitment to share responsibility and accountability for the design and implementation of strategic interventions." It is **not** "a transfer of responsibility from the classroom teacher to the Learning Support teacher".   (A Practical Guide for School Leaders: K. Pelletier, K. Bartlett, W. Powell, O. Kusuma-Powell).

A referral can come from the classroom teacher, the Learning Support teacher, the parent, or the student. A student may also be referred at the time of admission when documentation in the completed admissions file indicates Learning Support was provided at the previous school. In this case, the Admissions Team together with LSS will determine the need for Learning Support and appropriate LSS tier.

The decision for a student to receive Learning Support is made in collaboration with and consent from the parents. For new referrals, refer Appendix B.

Referrals for external evaluation and LSS screening:

The sectional SST will have had a prior discussion about recommended referral for external testing or LSS screening. Signed parent permission must be obtained for LSS screening to take place. In order for a referral for an external evaluation to take place, there must be a completed SOC form (Primary) or LSS referral form. Evidence of interventions taken place is needed.

A referral for an external evaluation should only occur after LSS screening has taken place (signed parent permission in LSS file). Interventions based on the LSS screening will have be implemented and documented for a period of time. The student should have received LSS for at least one semester. Referrals for external evaluations should not occur during the admissions process, unless there is just cause, and only in consultation with the NIS specialist (LSS or Counseling).

A request for external testing must be made via formal letter of referral on school letterhead for the parent to take to the evaluator. Copy of letter of referral is placed in the student's LSS file. The request should be done at a face to face meeting (never via email), with the NIS specialist (LSS or counselling) who have written and signed the referral letter and the Head of Section. This meeting must be documented on Veracross. Teachers may not recommend external testing.

Discussions concerning medication should only occur as a result of recommendations from a professional, for example, a clinical Psychologist in an evaluation recommends the family consider pharmaceutical intervention. Only relevant specialists such as medical practitioners or Psychiatrists can recommend medication.

Learning Support Case Managers

Each student who is receiving learning support or who is in the process of being referred for learning support is assigned a Learning Support Case Manager. This is one of the Learning Support Teachers. He/she is familiar with the student's needs and works to ensure those needs are being met and are documented.

Learning Support Case Manager responsibilities:
1. Knows and understands the student's individual needs (i.e. academic, social/emotional, behavioral, and medical) and shares that information with the student's team.
2. Prepares and updates relevant AEPs once a year, and IEPs every 6 months, in consultation with the student's teachers.
3. Facilitates Child Study Team (CST) or Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings. Attends SST meetings.
4. Advocates for the student's needs
5. Collaborates with the student's teacher(s) and manages information during the referral process.
6. Offers practical differentiation strategies to teachers based on the student's individual needs.
7. Recommends specific classroom accommodations and monitors the consistent use of those accommodations in testing and instructional settings.
8. Works with the Student Study Team when modifications to curriculum are warranted, develops modification plan (IEP) based on recommendations and results of current psycho-educational evaluation, documents specific modifications on report card and/or transcript, and obtains parent permission prior to modification implementation.
9. Makes recommendations for and coordinates internal and external support services (i.e. speech and language, OT, PT, counseling) both at NIS and with outside service providers.
10. Monitors and shares student progress.
11. Works collaboratively with parents to ensure they are informed of the referral process and available support and that they are included in developing goals and monitoring progress.
12. Helps compile documentation for departing students and shares with parents and relevant NIS personnel.

Transition Between Sections (Primary, Middle, Upper)

The transition process for students receiving Learning Support is an important time in a student's school life. At NIS, we work collaboratively among divisions to ensure that student needs are communicated and planned for in a way that facilitates a successful transition to the next section.

Steps to Transition
1. The case manager compiles detailed information about students receiving learning support, including AEPs, IEPs, evaluations/reports, strategies, and other relevant data.

2. The Learning Support teacher meets with the relevant teachers to share information about students.

Confidentiality

Confidential information is frequently shared among a student's team of professionals. The purpose of sharing confidential and sensitive information is to better understand how a student learns. It is a professional obligation of all NIS faculty members to protect confidential information.

Guidelines related to students receiving Learning Support:
1. It is expected that all LSS team members will remind faculty about the confidentiality of student information.
2. Confidential conversations will take place in secure locations.
3. Confidential information will not be left in public areas.
4. Psycho-educational evaluations may be shared only with those teachers currently working with a student and will be maintained in the student's LSS file.

NIS will not forward confidential records to other schools or outside agencies without the written consent of the student's parent/guardian.

Appendix A: Entrance Criteria for Learning Support

	CRITERIA*
A.	- Documented concern by previous or current teachers. (STEP 1 LSS Referral Process) - The student has a history of poor academic grades as indicated on progress report/report card grades (STEP 1 LSS Referral Process) - Documented interventions and strategies have been consistently implemented overtime (4-6 weeks) with little or no progress evident. (STEP 2 LSS Referral Process) - The student demonstrates academic achievement below year/grade expectations on LSS screeners** (STEP 5 LSS Referral Process) - The student's standardized test scores are <25%ile or <SS 90 for grades 4 and above. (STEP 4 LSS Referral Process)

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
PS	1 year below grade level	1-2 years below grade level	Refer to LSS Handbook
MS/US	2-3 years below grade level	4-5 years below grade level	

- The student has elevated scores on LSS executive functioning screener

B.	The student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Accommodation Plan or Individual Learning Plan (ILP) from a previous school.
C.	The student has a current psycho-educational evaluation (3-5 years) and/or a diagnosed learning disability that impacts learning (ADHD or Autism)
D.	The student has a diagnosed physical disability that impacts learning.

*Criterion A is part of the referral process. Criteria B, C, and D automatically entitle students to receive Learning Support Services.

**The SST will review the student's educational history, English language proficiency, and learning behavior to determine the most appropriate supports. For MS/US, Student's course selection will be evaluated to determine appropriateness of course selection prior to entrance in Learning Support.

Adapted from I. S. Basal's Entrance Criteria from Danette Sack (February 2018)

Appendix B: LSS Referral Process

Referral Process

Continue to the following step as needed

LSS Consultation

| Who is your LSS Team? Learning Support Teachers, Counselors |

| Contact current/past colleagues about concerns/check file (where possible) | Teachers | Step 1 |

| Identify & implement strategies and interventions. Track, monitor and evaluate interventions (ES SOC process) | Teachers & LSS | Step 2 |

| Teacher(s) begins to fill(s) LSS Referral Form. Discuss at SST | Teachers/SST | Step 3 |

| LSS observes/assesses/screens student and documents on referral form. Support in adjusted interventions/strategies. | SST/Teachers | Step 4 |

| Teacher completes referral form, discuss at SST when the student enter LSS. Place on tier and decide on LSS provision (if necessary) | LSS | Step 5 |