



STUDENT SUPPORT

Learning Support Mission Statement

MEF International School inspires, nurtures and challenges students to realise their unique potential. It provides equality in opportunities so that each child is guided to discover and develop intellectual, creative, social and physical potentials. It encourages an open-minded community striving for creativity, innovation and excellence. Students are encouraged to become confident, balanced and socially responsible individuals who will contribute positively to local and global communities.

Statement of Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all students receive appropriate support for their academic and social success.

Philosophy of Learning Support

The quintessential responsibility of teachers is to encourage students to take risks with their learning and to prepare them to become global citizens. At MEF International School, students are encouraged to promote self and social awareness and develop their critical thinking and reasoning capacities. Students are encouraged to become autonomous active learners, capable of synthesising information and deepening their knowledge with challenging, curiosity-driven and purposeful learning. MEF IS is an inclusive learning environment that fosters safety, well-being, and social and academic growth. It is the responsibility of staff, students and parents alike to support our students in meeting their own individual needs. Instruction is differentiated to allow students to have various entry points to their learning and to allow each student to achieve their individual learning goals. This collaborative approach, coupled with a growth mindset, empowers students to be responsible and active learners and respectful global citizens. Inclusion is an ongoing process aiming to increase access and engagement for all students by identifying and removing barriers to learning. Inclusion is facilitated in a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support and problem-solving involving the whole school community (Learning diversity and inclusion in IB Programmes, 2016).

Learning Support at MEF IS

The Learning Support Specialist works with a team of educators in order to identify and meet the needs of students who have a diagnosed learning difficulty. They work collaboratively with staff to ensure that students receive equitable access to the curriculum. They support staff by providing professional development on various teaching pedagogies including differentiation. They support both students and teachers by identifying individual learning styles and interests, scaffolding, modifying and accommodating learning tasks in order to help students achieve their unique potential.

The Learning Support Specialist monitors the progress of students and, where necessary, provides and conducts internal literacy and numeracy assessments. They provide feedback and recommendations for

external referrals where necessary and provide follow-up on student progress and development. They provide intervention strategies through tiers which outline different levels of modifications and accommodations. They provide Individual Educational Plans appropriate to each student. They work closely with the Counsellor to monitor student well-being and engagement. They exercise confidentiality at all times.

MEF IS provides learning support services for a range of disabilities from mild to moderate. A decision about the level of support required is the responsibility of the student support team under the leadership of the learning support teacher. Each student's program is designed to meet the needs of the student by emphasizing strengths, remediating weaknesses, and supporting curriculum access.

Understanding the terminology

Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

The *Individual Educational Plan* (IEP) is a working document that is designed specifically for each student who has been formally diagnosed with a learning difficulty. This plan identifies that the student is on a learning program, which may be modified and may have curriculum adjustments (accommodations or modifications - see below) appropriate to their level of ability. Students who have an IEP will have personal and academic goals. The IEP is reviewed during and at the end of the year and is updated accordingly. The IEP is a working document that, while kept confidential within school staff, is communicated to all appropriate teaching staff ensuring student services and accommodations are provided across school settings.

Accommodations

Accommodations are adaptations to the general education curriculum that do not change the benchmarks or standards established for each grade level but provide students with support to cope with their learning differences (e.g. extra time, fewer homework questions, use of laptop for written work, responding orally rather than in writing for exams, etc). When a student has a learning difficulty that has been identified through psycho-educational tests, the school may put into place accommodations that may help the student, e.g. more time during tests/exams. These accommodations should all be listed in the IEP. It is the responsibility of all teachers to be knowledgeable of these accommodations and to ensure they are provided.

Modifications

Modifications are provided when students are unable to attain grade level benchmarks or standards for particular academic areas and need significant adaptations to gain from the academic subject (e.g. cannot master all required concepts, may not be able to read grade level texts, etc). When a student has a learning difficulty diagnosis that has been identified through psycho-educational tests, the school may put into place modifications to parts of the program that may help the student, e.g. alternative assignments in specific subject areas, modified grading practices which measure student growth and not against the class standard (teachers will take into consideration effort, etc). Students' modifications should be directed toward their actual academic achievement levels and not those of their actual grade. That is, a student might be in 9th grade English but reading at a 5th grade level, hence they should be given appropriately leveled reading and writing tasks.

Key Roles and Responsibilities:

Learning Support Specialist

The Learning Support Specialist performs a variety of duties to support the student's holistic development. This fosters the growth mindset in academic, social and emotional learning. MEF IS provides an inclusive learning support program. The purpose of an inclusive learning support program is to provide children with disabilities with a meaningful and respectful learning experience that creates in them self-confidence and a sense of belonging to a larger community. Strategies to achieve this goal are many, varied and individualized with a focus on how children learn. It is our responsibility to support these students in learning how to learn. Services are provided in the least restrictive environment.

The Learning Support Specialist performs the following duties:

- Reading and deepening understanding of specific learning difficulty
- Interview students (learning about them personally)
- Identify key strengths and weaknesses
- Identify strategies for differentiating tasks (learning strengths)
- Outline modifications and accommodations specific to learning the difficulty
- Develop an Individual Educational Plan (IEP)
- Push in (in-class support from the teacher) to classes
- Pull out students of class for one-to-one work
- Pull students out of class for group work
- Facilitate after school help sessions
- Numeracy/Literacy support
- Small group instruction
- Study and organizational skills instruction
- Assist with organizational tasks and develop organizational skills
- Create a homework program where necessary
- Monitor academic progress/reviewing school report
- Communicate effectively with parents/guardians regarding student progress/updates via email and face-to-face meetings.

Staff Collaboration

At MEF International School our positive school culture cultivates an inclusive environment. To aid this, the Learning Support Specialist alongside the Student Support Team, build a program that reflects the priorities and the resources of the school. This empowers teachers to reflect on their pedagogy and use differentiation strategies that give each student access to an entry point to their learning.

It is the responsibility of every teacher, as a teacher of all students, to make sure that each student is exposed to teaching and learning that reaches them as individual learners. Every educator is an educator of all students (Learning diversity and inclusion in IB Programmes, 2016).

With this, the Learning Support Specialist seeks to:

- Provide professional development on most recent teaching pedagogies
- Connect current educational philosophy and programme pedagogy to daily teaching and learning practice
- Communicate student learning styles, interests and attitudes to support access to curriculum and student achievement

- Assist staff to develop their practice in modifying exams and coursework
- Work collaboratively with the Student Support Team to ensure the student is receiving support needs relevant to their learning difficulty
- Work closely with the Counsellor and Head of Department to ensure student growth and putting in place appropriate intervention structures
- Work with all staff to promote confidentiality and empathy
- Regularly attend and facilitate student support meetings
- Outline referral processes with students presenting areas of concern
- Work with staff to complete initial referral and areas of concern (verbal)
- Work with staff to complete formal referral and reporting of areas of concern (written)
- Assist during examination periods (invigilation, extra time room)

Assessment and Documentation

MEF IS aims to promote professional dialogue and strengthen pedagogical practice. Good pedagogy relies on consistent, reliable and valid assessment and reporting. The Learning Support Specialist seeks to work alongside staff to ensure that the curriculum meets the specific needs of their students. They use this to form the basis of determining the next stages of learning. This then nourishes:

- The development and documentation of IEP's/Action Plan's
- Student support plan (IEP) is constantly reviewed and updated throughout the year
- Documenting staff meetings/Student Support Group meetings
- Monitoring student academic data
- Modifying tasks/activities
- Modifying exams
- Documenting tier support accommodations/modifications;
 - o **Tier 1 intervention** - simplified language, directions explained.
 - o **Tier 2 intervention** - moderate modifications, simplified language, some visual assistance, small group testing, access to a dictionary and extra time.
 - o **Tier 3 intervention** - highly modified, simplified language, explicit instructions and directions, visual guides, small group testing, the scaffolding of questions, sentence starters, access to a dictionary, access to a calculator and extra time.
- Use a variety of assessment tools to identify student strengths and weaknesses and/or learning difficulties.
- Where there is a possibility of a learning difficulty, a Learning Support Specialist informs Student Support Team Lead to inform parents and arrange for an educational psychological assessment.
- Responsibility for obtaining formal assessment documentation ultimately rests with families and not the school.
- Refer to MEF IS Communication Procedures
- Communicating with appropriate outside professionals for assessment purposes whilst maintaining confidentiality
- Maintaining a log of communication between Learning Support Specialist and staff
- Presenting and providing resources to staff on specific learning difficulties

Students entering Cambridge examinations wishing for special arrangements in line with their needs must submit medical or psychological evaluation materials by Cambridge deadlines.

Students in the IB Diploma wishing for special arrangements in line with their needs must submit medical or psychological evaluation materials by IB deadlines. The formal assessment must be from a

medical or psychological service. The report may be written by a clinical team comprising various medical, health, educational or counselling professionals with appropriate qualifications.

Learning Support Referral Process

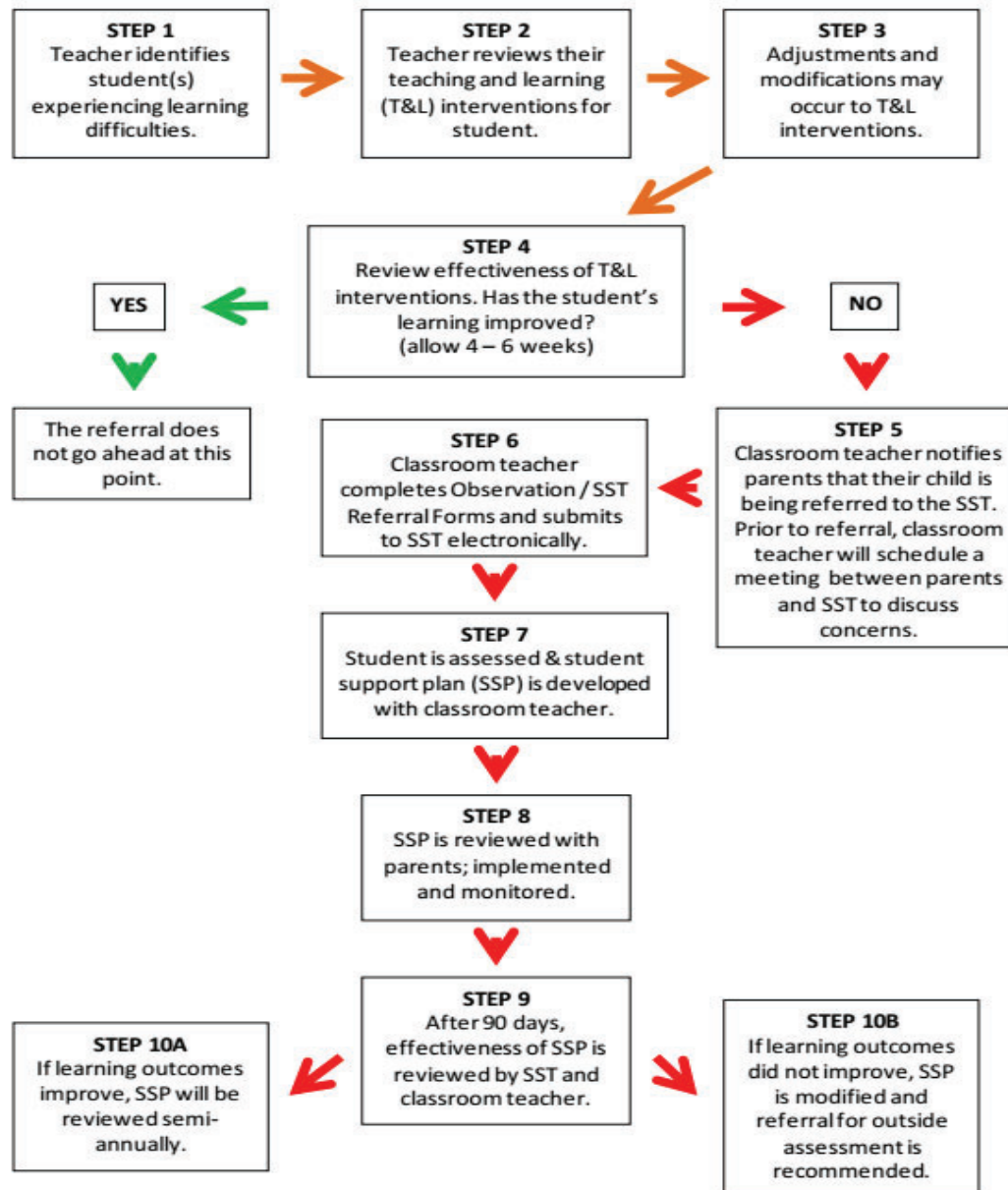
The Student Support Referral Procedure is put in place to maintain a systematic school which fully supports our students. The Student Support Team will work with teachers to ensure all tiers of Responses to Intervention (RTI) are being implemented. This requires teachers, Student Support Team members, and the community as a whole to work and follow these procedures with fidelity.

In order to refer a student to the Student Support Team the following referral process must be completed in full.

Student Support Referral Process

1. Collaborate with other teachers and specialists to determine if concern occurs in specific or multiple settings.
2. Implement strategies, differentiate and collect data. Consult with the Student Support Team for ideas.
3. Share concerns with parents and students to come up with solutions.
4. After implementing pre-referral strategies with fidelity and concerns continue, the teacher completes the Student Support Team referral form and shares any documentation, including any pre-referral strategies and outcomes. The teacher must inform the student's parents that a referral is being made.
5. The referring teacher attends the Student Support Team meeting to present the referral.

Student Support Team Referral Process



Post Referral

After a referral is made the Student Support Team will work with the student, their teachers, and parents to put in place a tier 2 intervention plan lasting between 4-6 weeks. This may include counseling, behavior, and/or learning support. It may involve push-ins, observations, check-ins, and mentorship.

Psychological Assessment

If after tier 2 interventions fail to show significant improvement in student progress, the Student Support Team will contact the student's parents and request a psychological assessment.

If an assessment is completed and is returned with a diagnosis of a learning difficulty or other, the student will officially be placed on the Student Support caseload. At this stage we will offer tier 3 individualized supports including intervention plans, push-ins and/or pull-outs with team members.

Exiting students from Learning Support

Students may be exited from learning support services when they

- Are working to their potential on grade level standard for a sustained period of time of at least half a school year, based on standardized assessment
- Understand their learning profile
- Demonstrate the use of strategies to compensate effectively for their disability
- Demonstrate effective self-advocacy skills

There must be a consensus from the student support team and Declaration of Consideration for Learning Support Services form signed by parents. Students will continue to be case managed under monitor status until they leave MEFIS or the status of their disability changes.

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