



EDUCATION

# **GEMS World Academy, Dubai Learning Support Handbook**

**Updated January, 2016**

أكاديمية جيمز العالمية – دبي  
**GEMS World Academy**  
DUBAI

# Mission & Vision

## **Learning Support Mission Statement**

*GEMS World Academy – Dubai (GWA) provides an inclusive learning environment to meet the needs of our school community. The school through the delivery of the IB programs of PYP, MYP and DP, will provide teaching and learning strategies to ensure that each student is able to access the curriculum being provided and successfully demonstrate their knowledge and skills through appropriate assessment procedures.*

## **Learning Support Vision**

*The goal of the Learning Support team is to promote a whole-school approach to identifying, planning, implementing and monitoring support for learners with a specific learning need, difficulty or disability. This is accomplished by providing appropriate learning strategies and accommodations that enable these learners to reach their potential in a supportive community and inclusive learning environment. With this support, we believe these learners can be successful learning in an IB World School and become autonomous, life-long learners.*

# Learning Support Students

The Learning Support Department at GWA is intended for those students who have an identified learning need, difficulty or disability. As a school, we recognize that a learner might require additional support if the student has difficulties with:

- all of the work in school;
- reading, writing, number work or understanding information;
- expressing themselves or understanding what others are saying;
- making friends or relating to adults;
- behaving properly in school;
- organising themselves, completing tasks or focusing on activities;
- some kind of sensory or mobility needs that may affect them in some or all school activities
- is considered a High End Learner (HEL); or
- has a combination of any of the needs listed above.

GWA utilizes the document from KHDA entitled “Special Educational Needs Categories” to categorize students’ needs. These categories include:

Behavioral, Emotional, Social

Sensory and Physical

Medical Condition or Health Related Disability

Communication and Interaction (This does not include students acquiring English as a second or other language.)

Learning

Gifted and Talented/High End Learners

Disabled

Students with learning support needs at GWA must be able to function in the regular classrooms with support and accommodations. An alternative curriculum may be designed for a student with severe to profound learning need and if they are unable to meet the curriculum requirements of their grade level. The Learning Support Team liaises with parents, students and teachers to ensure that learners have access to appropriate assessment accommodations in PYP, MYP and DP programs. All accommodations follow the guidelines provided by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO).

# Student Identification

All potential students of GWA must complete the regular admission processes for the grade level for which they are applying. Students with learning needs are identified during this process by parent information (including the provision of medical reports), GWA admission assessments and information provided by the previous school. Depending on the student's identified needs and their entry level to GWA the admissions team may request additional information or processes:

## **Early Childhood (PYP)**

The GWA admission team will review all the documents submitted by the parents including medical reports, reports from outside support agencies and previous school reports and IEPs. The GWA admissions team including the Head of Learning Support services will meet with the parents and discuss a process to determine the student's learning needs. The process may include meeting with outside support agencies, visit to current nursery schools, and additional individual and group assessment at GWA.

## **Elementary School (Grades 1-5, PYP)**

Students will complete an individual assessment as per Elementary Admissions procedures with an Elementary Counselor;

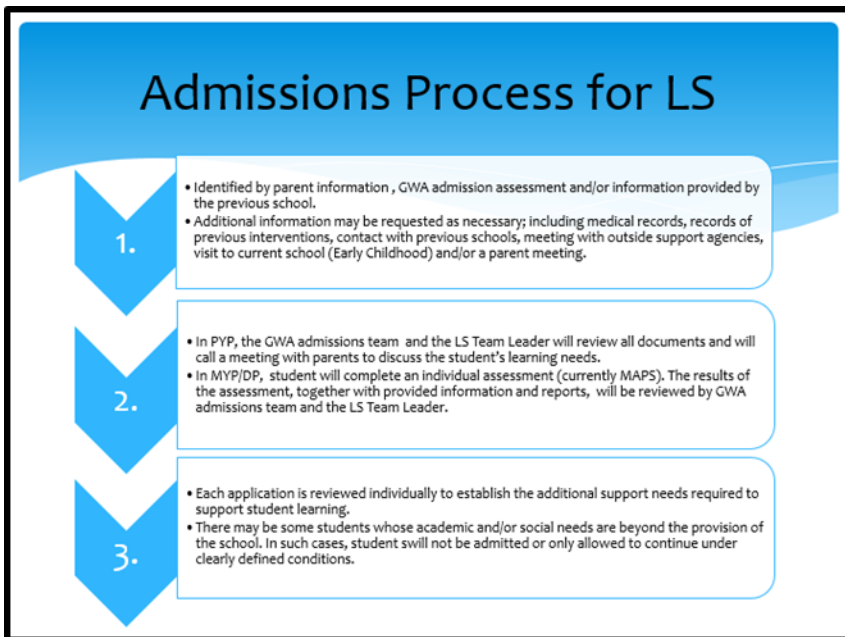
during this assessment the counselor may observe indicators of challenges to learning, the counselors may also discuss observed challenges with parents. The Elementary Admissions team including the Head of Learning Support services review all documents submitted by the parents including medical reports, reports from outside agencies and previous school reports and IEPs.

## **Secondary School (Grades 6-12, MYP and DP)**

Students will complete an individual assessment as per Secondary Admissions procedures (currently Measurement of Academic Progress). The results of this assessment, together with information provided by parents, previous school reports and medical/intervention reports by outside agencies, are review by the Secondary Admissions team including the Head of Learning Support services.

## **All Learning Support applications**

Additional information may be requested as necessary; including medical records, records of previous interventions, contact with previous schools and or a parent meeting. Each application is reviewed individually to establish the additional support needs required to support student learning.



There may be some students whose academic and/or social needs are beyond the provision of the school. In such cases students will not be admitted or only allowed to continue under clearly defined conditions in a Conditional Acceptance this includes the financial responsibility for a Shadow TA if required. Support provisions are subject to annual review. The final decision regarding placement rests with the Division Principals and ultimately the Head of School.

### **Identification of Learning Needs via Classroom Observations:**

#### ***Elementary School (Grades K-5, PYP)***

Classroom teachers may identify a student with difficulties in learning via a combination of professional observation, classroom work, observation of academic and developmental milestones, grade

level assessments, standardised assessments and/or parent meetings. Classroom teacher will consult with the Learning Support Team to review their observations and evidence and may request additional observations from the Learning Support Team. On conclusion of this review either strategies will be discussed for classroom intervention or parents will be informed of a referral to Learning Support to find out further information about the student's individual learning needs.

#### ***Secondary School (Grade 6-12, MYP and DP)***

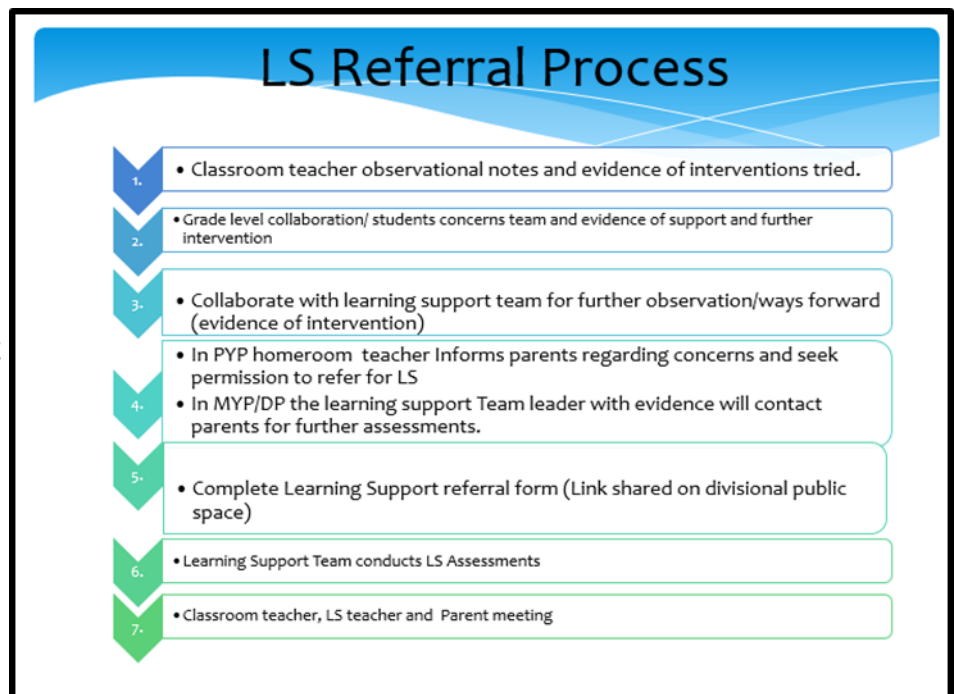
Subject teacher may identify a student with difficulties in learning via a combination of professional observation, classroom work, subject and grade level assessments, and or standardised assessments and/or parent meetings. Subject teachers will contact the students secondary counselor with their concerns, the counselor will bring completed survey of all the relevant subject teachers and bring all the information to the weekly scheduled Student Concerns Meetings. Student Concern Meetings are attended by school counselling team, administration and learning support. On conclu-

sion of this review either, strategies will be discussed for classroom intervention, counselling support or parents will be informed of a referral to Learning Support to find out further information about the student's individual learning needs.

#### ***Learning Support Referral***

Once the decision to refer a student to the learning support department for more information, the following process is followed:

Official notification that the learning support department will be completing observations and diagnostic assessments with their child is sent to the parents. The observations and assessments are to assist in providing more in-depth information about their child's learning strengths and needs. The assessments may include the following diagnostic tests:



The learning team will examine the information and results identify student needs. These sources may include:

- a. teacher observations
- b. classroom assessments and products
- c. specialized assessments
- d. parent observations

3. The Educational Team will meet with the parents and outline an intervention plan. The intervention plan may include:

- a. Collaboration between Class/Subject Teacher, Learning Support Team, Counsellor, Parents and student (if they are old enough) with strategies and accommodations to assist in learning.
- b. In Class support by Learning Support Team to provide intervention in class with specific links for curriculum and appropriate learning behaviours.
- c. Learning Support Lessons – this is an intensive lesson for small groups or individuals to address specific skills and knowledge by direct instruction and may also include curriculum assistance, pre-teaching of concepts and homework assistance. (There is an additional fee for this service)
- d. Accommodations support to learning assessments (IB policy – “Candidates with Special Assessment Needs”)

4. The Learning Support Team will complete a Learning Support Document and/or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for teachers, outlining the relevant learning information for the student. This document also provides suggested strategies for differentiation and assessment accommodations. If students are to receive intensive lessons from the learning support team, the student will have an IEP that outlines the academic and/or social goals.

# Learning Support Program Components

## *Observation and Monitoring*

These students have a Learning Support Document where their specific learning style, including strengths and challenges are provided to their teaching team. This document also suggests possible strategies, and accommodations that may assist in student learning and help them demonstrate their knowledge and skills through assessment. Progress monitoring is completed via classroom assessments and twice yearly MAPS testing. Individual teaching teams are informed of changes and updates and liaison with the learning support department is based on the individual needs of each student.

## *In Class Support*

Learning support teachers work in collaboration with class/subject teachers to provide intervention within the regular class instruction. This assists students by ensuring their understanding of content and processes, curriculum homework expectations and assist in promoting appropriate classroom behaviours. Progress monitoring is completed via classroom assessments and twice yearly MAPS testing.

## *Learning Support Lessons (Pull Out Support or Intensive Instruction)*

Students may attend Learning Support lessons to work on identified challenges to learning. The lessons may be small group or individual to address specific skills and knowledge identifies by the referral process or via progress monitoring, and may also include curriculum assistance, pre-teaching of concepts and homework assistance. Student goals are designed by both learning support and class/subject teachers and documented on the student's IEP. These goals are reviewed and reported on each quarter and new goals are set. Progress monitoring is completed via the STAR 360 program (reading and math) on a monthly basis, learning support observations and student work, classroom assessments and twice yearly MAPS testing.

## *Assessment Accommodations*

All assessment accommodations follow IB guidelines in the IBO publications:

- a. Candidates with Special Assessment Needs
- b. Candidates with Assessment Access Requirements
- c. Learning Diversity in IB Programmes

Student's ability to access and complete assessment is evaluated based on their individual learning needs. The information is shared with teachers, parents and students. All accommodations are to ensure that students with learning disabilities or learning difficulties are equitable and promote fairness where their individual learning challenges may disadvantage their ability to demonstrating knowledge, skills and/or understanding.

# Exiting Learning Support

A student may exit learning support services when the learning support teacher, classroom teacher, Head of Learning Support, and Division Principal agree that the student is capable of functioning autonomously and successfully in the regular instructional classroom as well as meeting the grade-level requirements. Before any final action is taken, the student will continued to be monitored for 6-12 months to ensure continued success. The student's parents are part of the decision making process and are including in all recommended changes to student support services.

# Services & Fees

The support services may include, working with the classroom teacher to provide support strategies within the classroom environment; in-class support and/or intensive pull out support lessons, either individually or in a small group. If two or more intensive pull out support lessons a cycle are recommended, there is a fee charged by semester and is re-evaluated each year. When a student's support needs require an alternative curriculum or their learning needs require continuous intensive support the school may recommend a Shadow TA to work 1:1 with the student to provide the appropriate level of support for learning. All arrangements are discussed with parents and reviewed yearly. The cost of the Shadow TA service is the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

# Supporting Documents

Elementary School Learning Support Referral Form

Secondary School Learning Support Referral Form

Elementary School Individualized Education Plan Template

Secondary School Individualized Education Plan Template

Learning Support Documents

Observation Templates (Behavior & Academic)