



Inclusion Policy

Last Review/update: December 2021

Philosophy

The International School of Texas is a diverse community with greatly varying origins and perspectives with children of different skill levels and abilities who are committed to inclusion of its stakeholders in the pursuit of our mission.

IST policy and practice strives to create a culture of inclusion. We strive to develop and maintain an environment where all students and stakeholders' contributions are valued. We seek to be inclusive and participatory (in organizational reflection and development). Students contribute through their student government with House Captains and Head Boy and Girl. Parents have input through the Teacher Parent League (TPL) and board as well as through quantitative and qualitative collection of opinion. Administrators make decisions through the careful consideration of valued stakeholder feedback.

We believe differences enrich our learning environment and develop understanding, respect, recognition, and appreciation. Moreover, this belief in inclusion is completely compatible with our mission statement:

IST provides a comprehensive education that is inquiry-based and internationally-minded, enabling children to become life-long learners. IST students are knowledgeable, empathetic and caring global citizens, inspired to take action and solve problems for the betterment of themselves, others and the world around them.

- IST Mission Statement

A continual process of inclusion is essential to ensuring and nurturing a culture of inclusion. In reviewing and developing our policies we discuss as teams and seek the perspectives of others within IST. Inclusion in the recruitment process of new staff members includes the Head of School, Program coordinator/ Deputy Head, relevant subject matter experts, and other relevant team members.

Inclusion at IST

IST has had a history of inclusion from its founding that has developed as it has grown. Our curriculum of inquiry is rigorous and fosters open-minded thinkers who accept differences. We appreciate that two people can disagree and both be right, in their own ways. Understanding perspectives in our community enables us to be more empathetic and be more capable of taking effective action in our communities. This again is core to our school's mission. We are multicultural both in terms of curriculum and community. We celebrate our diversity with our Culture Club where members of our community come to share cultural experiences on an ongoing basis. We have a rich connection with world languages with our Mandarin and Spanish language acquisition classes as well as our available mother tongue maintenance resources and guidance.

Inclusion in organizational development is an essential part of all IB World Schools. We undergo self-studies to review our philosophies, policies, and curriculum, including the vertical and horizontal alignment of approaches to teaching and learning. When reviewing policy and practice this includes how we tailor differentiation techniques to each child's individual needs. Faculty collaborates with learning specialist teachers to support inclusion, differentiation, and assessment effectively. We subscribe to accessing and appreciating the prior knowledge in order to extend learning. Scaffolding techniques are used to help bridge gaps in student learning as appropriate. In the end, we seek to develop the identity of the student, not define them by a learning need or phase of learning.

Our support team has a lead teacher, relevant faculty members, a learning specialist, and the program coordinator. In some cases, we outsource support specialists with whom our in-house support team collaborates. In order to approach inclusion collaboratively we actively seek to build the right student support system. In order to help build the right student support system, student needs inform school resource purchases, community resource networking, coordination, and explicit addressing of barriers to learning.

English Language Learners (ELL) are included in our normal program to provide an immersive experience to acquire the target language at an accelerated rate. In the PYP, the process of language acquisition is full immersion with a focus on social and emotional development.

IST Team Roles for Inclusion & Intervention

Faculty members refer to SLRs (student learning records) during class planning and practice. There are several possible interventions faculty members may take including implementation of specific differentiation strategies, tutoring recommendations, and even small group pull out or addition into class with a Learning Specialist.

PYP Lead Teachers liaise with parents on goals and progress for students on SLRs. **Learning Specialists** help facilitate learning in small groups or within the dynamics of a classroom setting. They may also be present in parent meetings with PYP Lead Teachers.

Wellbeing Coordinator (school nurse) acts as reinforcement to the lead teachers or other faculty to address social or emotional issues. This role collaborates with other team members and steps in a timely manner to provide initial counseling and may recommend further external counselling to parents of students on a case by case basis.

The Student Learning Record (SLR) Meeting

SLR Team includes the program coordinator, relevant teachers and relevant learning specialist to review SLR. This meeting takes place with the classroom teacher(s). The SLR will have been reviewed by Lead Teacher and Learning Support prior to the meeting. There are three meetings over the course of the year.

Resources and Support

Resources and support for student inclusion are provided and guided by the SLR team. This includes a breakdown of tutoring offered on campus and within a network of recommended tutors. Moreover, a list of associated professionals to help facilitate students in different situations or with a specific diagnosis.

Counseling

Students' social and emotional needs are first met by their teachers, especially their Lead Teacher. At the next level counselling begins with our Wellbeing Coordinator who may refer families to a recommended counselor with whom the school is familiar.

Assessment

Generally, we use assessments in our unit inquiries to identify where a student is at any given time. We may use our observations to recommend a parent seek an outside assessment for a potential learning disability. However, our faculty does not diagnose these disabilities independently. Moreover, we assess students using MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) throughout the PYP as a standardized form of testing. Reading A - Z is used in the primary school as a means to determine and track student independent and instructional reading levels to better

ensure they are able to access the reading material effectively. See our assessment policy for greater details.