

Learning Diversity Handbook Policy

ROTTERDAM INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

This policy will be next reviewed in
September 2020 and every two years
thereafter.

Policy for Staff consultation & MR Approval

Students and parents initiating direct contact with the LD Specialist would be referred to their tutors unless there is an existing care plan and/or evaluation/diagnosis describing the learning difficulty. In the latter case the LD Specialist would develop accommodations plan and reach to the teachers.

Learning Diversity Philosophy and Definitions

The RISS Learning Diversity Program expands the capacity of the school to respond to the individual educational needs and be inclusive of all students. The RISS comprehensive model combines a unique approach featuring *traditional tutoring blended with educational and psychological therapy* to address needs and interests of each student.

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Learning Diversity Definitions

Learning Diversity Support, LDS, is a specialized area of education providing children and young adults with individual and unique rates of development opportunities for optimal growth, a meaningful and purposeful life as a result of full access to education. The RISS offers a comprehensive, a whole-child approach to LDS by (1) increasing access to learning content, (2) developing study and organizational skills, and (3) incorporating educational therapy, i.e. an approach based on the holistic well-being of a student. RISS provides stages of support for students with learning difficulties as well as some learning disability conditions.

Learning Difficulty

Learning difficulty is defined as difficulty in one or more areas of learning that is significantly greater than in the majority of children of the same age. Learning difficulty may persist for a number of years caused by physical, educational, emotional and/or environmental factors. However, this difficulty has a potential to gradually disappear with appropriate and intensive supports.

Learning Disability

Learning disability is a chronic life-long condition that is caused by a physical or mental impairment which interferes with academic performance. Learning disability cannot be eliminated by educational interventions, but accommodations can be created in mild cases to allow for the most optimal performance. Learning disabilities are diagnosed by outside agencies and cannot be diagnosed by the school staff.

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Giftedness

A gifted and talented student as one who exhibits excellence or the capacity for excellence far beyond that of their chronological peers in one or more gifted/talented categories (e.g., intellectual ability, high achievement ability and specific academic ability).

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Scope and Aims

Learning Diversity support is a cross-disciplinary, problem-oriented field of services which is directed toward mobilizing and improving a variety of resources to meet the educational needs of children and youth who learn differently and at different rates. The short-term goals for students include preparation for tests, homework completion assistance and in-depth review of classroom materials. Long-term goals include skills leading to life independence including teaching study and organization skills, developing attention and focus skills, encouraging self-advocacy skills and healthy self-esteem.

Learning Diversity Services support skills of

CONCEPT LEARNING

1. By reviewing class material using a variety of visual and interactive media approaches
2. By repeating key concepts and clarifying them to deepen understanding

STUDY & ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS:

1. By offering test-taking strategies
2. By reviewing assignments and teaching planning skills
3. By encouraging active learning and open mind
4. Improving writing strategies and handwriting proper

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EXECUTIVE SKILLS STRATEGIES:

1. Memory strategies dealing with challenges related to short- and long-term memory;
2. Attention, e.g. teaching to focus on a task vs to appropriately shifting the focus;
3. Time management in meeting deadlines and organization;
4. Motivation and effort upbuilding.

Conditions Supported

RISS supports students with a variety of individual learning differences including:

- **Dyslexia**, learning difficulty that can cause problems with reading, writing and spelling
- **Specific numeracy difficulty**, learning difficulty that can cause problems with numeracy
- **Dyspraxia**, difficulty with writing caused by problems coordinating movements
- **ASD, Autism Spectrum Disorder** (mild)
- **ADD/ADHD, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**
- **Giftedness**, intellectual ability significantly higher than average

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Available Accommodations

1. Content presentation (alternate modes of access to content such as are auditory, multi-sensory, tactile, and visual)
2. Student response (completing activities, assignments, and assessments in different ways)
3. Setting and environment
4. Timing and scheduling

Accommodations vs Modifications

Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations associated with the grade and dictated by a curriculum. Accommodations provide access. In contrast, modifications or alterations refer to practices that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations. Examples of modifications include, but not limited to requiring a student to learn less material (e.g., fewer objectives, shorter units or lessons, fewer pages or problems), reducing assignments and assessments, so a student only needs to complete the easiest problems or items, and revising assignments or assessments to make them easier. Modifications have a potential to increase the gap between the student's achievements and the grade level and are not allowed at RISS.

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Examples: Test taking, Accommodations vs Modifications

	Accommodation	Modification
Extra time during tests	Allowed	
Reducing the number of test items		Not Allowed
Simplifying the test item		Not Allowed
Providing support materials, e.g. a table of multiplication	Allowed	

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Learning Support Process and Procedures

A. Learning Support Entrance Requirements

RISS recognizes that the admission of children with learning needs is complex and needs to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis. Every student with an existing support plan and school accommodations is required to turn in a complete application for admission including previous IEPs/care plans, any psychoeducational and medical reports and evaluations that a student has been previously given.

The application and supporting documentation will be considered by the School's Admissions team including The Head of Years, the school Counselor, EAL Coordinator and LD Specialist to decide if RISS can meet student's needs and provide with the opportunity to succeed. The placement and Stage of supports as well as Care Plan necessity would be decided and discussed with parents. In some cases, a prospective student may be tested by the school LD Specialist to determine basic academic levels.

B. Referral Process

A student without diagnosed disability continuously struggling with one or more areas of the academics significantly more than other students may be experiencing learning difficulties and can be referred to the LDS by a subject teacher working together with a tutor and Head of Section/Deputy Principal. It is important that all teachers understand the referral process is NOT a transfer of responsibility from the General Education to the LD Specialist. The referral process is the recognition that a student has difficulties in accessing the Curriculum and requires collective attention of a group of educators.

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Furthermore, while teachers should not be reluctant to refer a student, it is the referring teacher's responsibility to describe detail-specific differentiation techniques that have been attempted (Form A) and also to inform a tutor, an LDS and parents that a student is experiencing struggles in certain area(s). After 6-8 weeks of differentiation the referring teacher decides if steps towards formal referral should be initiated and informs the tutor and LDS. The tutor completes Form A. Pre-Referral Checklist (See Appendix) and contact parents to explain that a formal referral to the LDS has been started. Form A should be given to the LDS who would add a child to the list of students to be processed. Students files are processed in the order they were received.

Between the time the pre-referral checklist is received and the meeting of the LD team including the Head of the Years, and the referring teacher (no longer than 4 weeks) it is responsibility of an LDS to arrange and conduct observations, assessments, referral to a school counselor and collecting data from other teachers to gain comprehensive knowledge of a situation. The information gathered is formalized in Form C to present to the LD team. The team then reaches the decision about the Stage of Support and Placement, Form D, using the Support Criteria for Eligibility described below. Parents are contacted by the LDS and informed of the decision. The Learning Diversity Supports flowchart and Stages of Support are available in Appendices to illustrate the system of LD involvement.

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Stages of Support Criteria for Eligibility

In accordance with the RISS Learning Diversity 4-Stage Progress Model students supports are executed as the whole-school approach (see Appendix 1).

Stage 1

Classroom-based interventions and progress monitoring by a classroom teacher

- Please, check all that apply: Within grade level expectations for most learning behaviors
- Within grade level expectations for most academic areas
- Within grade level expectations for most social and emotional areas
- Good probability of a child making progress with classroom interventions

Stage 2

Learning Support from LD Team members (Form D)

Please, check all that apply:

- Formal and informal observations, assessments and evaluations have been conducted to determine the areas of need
- Approaching grade-level expectations in key learning behaviors that will require LD support to achieve success
- Approaching grade-level expectations in key academic areas that will require LD support to achieve success (small-group instruction, extra lessons offered by grade teachers plus accommodations and/or differentiation of materials/instruction)

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- Approaching grade-level expectations in key social-emotional behaviors that will require LD support to achieve success
- Indication that a student cannot make progress with classroom interventions only in the areas where she is approaching grade level expectations. The student will attend all extra classes offered by a grade teacher in the area of struggle and, additionally, receive a small group instruction 1-2 times a week from the LD team members.

Stage 3

Individual support as a part of comprehensive supports

Please, check all that apply:

- Formal and informal observations, assessments and evaluations have been conducted to determine the areas of need
- Well-below grade-level expectations in in key learning behaviors will require intense Learning support for growth including 1-on-1 instruction in the LD room
- Well-below grade-level expectations in in key academic areas will require intense Learning support for growth including 1-on-1 instruction in the LD room
- Well-below grade-level expectations in in key social-emotional areas will require intense Learning support for growth including 1-on-1 instruction in the LD room
- A student might be able to make progress but with intensive supports in addition to classroom interventions. These supports may include 1-2 individual or small group tutoring in the LD room and pull-out or push-in services from the LDS.

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Stage 4

Individual Care Plan and Curriculum modified

Please, check all that apply:

- Formal and informal observations, assessments and evaluations have been conducted to determine the areas of need
- Previous educational supports reviewed for the signs of academic struggles
- A student is 2 or more years below grade level in many learning behaviors, academic and socio-emotional areas. The student is unlikely to reach grade-level expectations and a special below-grade Curriculum with significant modifications of learning standards needs to be created
- Intensive supports including 1-on-1 supports, class pull-out and/or push in and other special accommodations overseen by an LDS planned and implemented
- Graduation does not guarantee full academic qualifications (i.e. a Diploma)
- Involvement from external agencies if necessary

The Individual Care plan is initiated when at least one academic area of the Form C (Referral) is marked as “Below Grade Level” and delays of 2 or more grade levels are documented. The Care plan offers 3 levels of academic goals which will be formulated for each individual (see Figure 1 below). The Care Plan initiated for students who are 2 years below their grade level, Care Plan/Level 1, are for students whose learning processes are intact and one-year worth of Curriculum content can be expected to be acquired in addition to modified exposure to the grade material. The Care Plan initiated for students who are 2-3 grade levels below their

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respective grade, Care Plan/Level 2, are initiated for students whose learning rate is slower than in neurologically-typical peers. Individual planning taking into the account the rate and specifics of learning will be created with realistic and appropriate goals clearly stated. The Care Plan/Level 3 is intended for students in unique situation when delays are more substantial than 3 years of grade access (e.g., illiteracy, home schooling, etc) and includes individual programming for all subjects and modified access to regular curriculum.

Figure 1. Stage 4: Individual Care Plan, ICP, and Curriculum Modifications

One or more academic areas of the Form C (Referral) is marked as 2 or more years "Below Grade Level"	
Level 1	One-year worth of Curriculum content can be expected to be acquired in addition to modified exposure to the grade material.
Level 2	Individual planning and appropriate grade placement (i.e. realistic goals) in one or more subject area is necessary
Level 3	Individual planning (i.e. realistic goals) in all subject areas is necessary due to significant Curriculum modifications

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Appendices (Forms and Graphic Representations)

1. Form A. Classroom-based Intervention
2. Form B. Pre-Referral Checklist
3. Form C. Referral Form
4. Form D. Stage of Support and Placement
5. Appendix 1. LEARNING DIVERSITY SUPPORT STAGES
6. Appendix 2. LEARNING DIVERSITY FLOWCHART

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A. PRE-REFERRAL CHECK LIST

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IMPORTANT: Completed by a Tutor together with a referring teacher. Has to be signed by the Head of the respective Years (electronic signature acceptable)

Referring Teacher/Date _____

Student Name _____

DOB _____

Grade/Subject(s) _____

Tutor & LDS informed. Date _____

Specific Areas of Concern:

Interventions Attempted: If YES, use *Form B. Interventions, Classroom-Based*

Check if completed:

_____ Contacted parents, shared concerns, gathered info.

_____ Checked a student file for any relevant info.

_____ Consulted with other teachers.

Signature of the Head of the Years (Ms, Swart/Mr. Roberts/Ms du Plessis _____

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B. INTERVENTION FORM, CLASSROOM-BASED

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IMPORTANT: Before starting Intervention discuss with both a tutor and LDS (sbo)

Date

Recipient

Referring Teacher

Grade/Subject

Name of a student, DOB

Student Struggles Described 1

Student Struggles Described 2

Intervention Description	Intervention Delivery	Check Up Date	Assessment Data

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C. REFERRAL FORM

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IMPORTANT: Please, complete this form and return to LDS

Tutor/Date _____

Recipient

Grade/Subject(s) _____

Student's date of entry to RISS:

Did you contact parents to inform them about this referral: _____

Home language _____

Does the student have any outside diagnosis/evaluation?

Briefly describe the reason for referral, any background information and interventions/outcomes attempted so far.

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D. STAGE OF SUPPORT AND PLACEMENT FORM

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Date of LDS team meeting: _____

In attendance: _____

Name of a student, Grade: _____

Discussion

Decision

Stage/ Who is responsible	Supports assigned	Check Up Date	Assessment Data

Additional Comments:

Parents will be contacted by:

Follow-up meeting? Yes No Date if YES

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LEARNING DIVERSITY SUPPORT STAGES

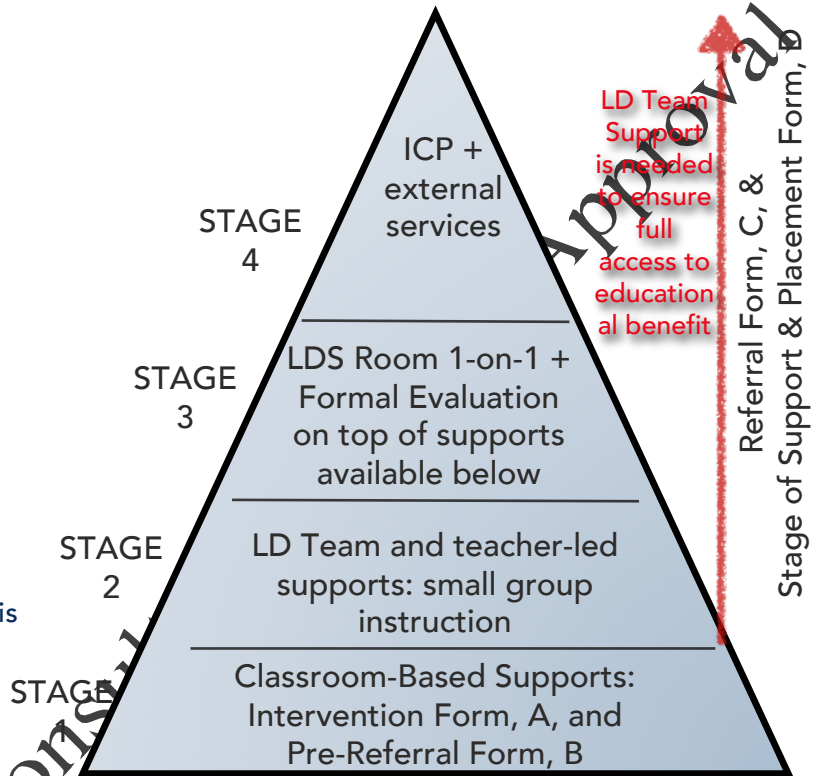
RISS, 2019/20

Stage 1. Basic classroom-based interventions: instructional differentiation and progress monitoring following initial testing and/or observations.

Stage 2. Supports (a small group instruction with a teacher/and/or LDS Team member) are added to classroom interventions.

Stage 3. Individual sessions in the LD Room on top of a small group instruction sessions and classroom interventions. Formal academic assessment if needed.

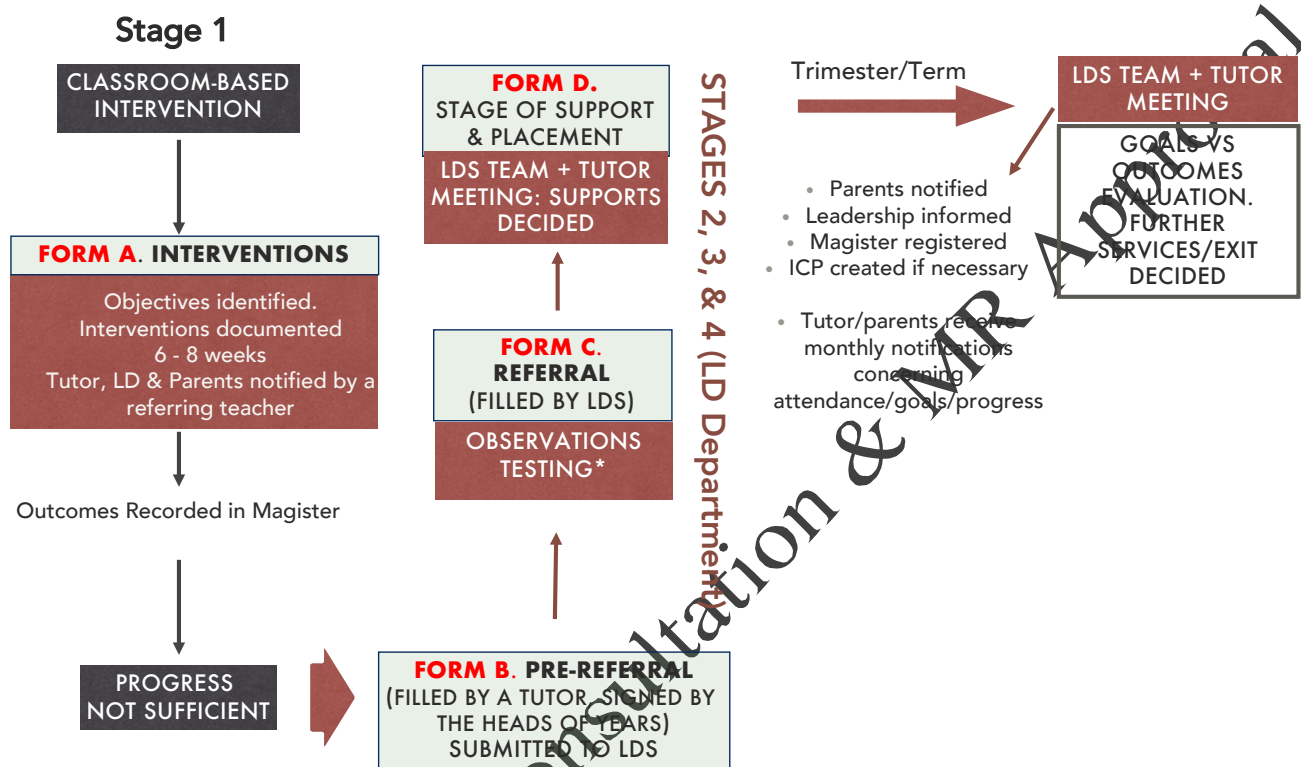
Stage 4. Individual Care Plan, ICP, is created when a student cannot be expected to complete grade year standards.



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LEARNING DIVERSITY SUPPORTS FLOWCHART

STAGES 1 - 4, 2018/19



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