



La Scuola International School

INCLUSION POLICY

This document outlines the beliefs, practices, roles, and reporting procedures that guide practices at La Scuola. It should be read in conjunction with our Student and Family Handbook, Personnel Handbook other Learning Policies: Language, Assessment, Admissions, and Academic Integrity.

This document was reviewed by La Scuola's community in the Spring of 2024, and is applicable to the school year of 2024-2025 and beyond until another review is necessary.

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Inclusion Philosophy

As a school inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, we uphold a high image of the child, concentrating on each learner's potential. While more traditional educational approaches may focus on a student's deficits or gaps, at La Scuola we focus on the whole child, identifying their strengths and abilities to best support their overall development. We believe every child deserves access to a learning environment and guidance that foster the development of their full potential. At La Scuola, we are dedicated to providing a holistic education grounded in principles of inclusion. We embrace diversity, and promote an inclusive environment that nurtures our students' individual growth, observing their unique needs while upholding rigorous standards of academic achievement. Our aim is to empower students to reach their full potential by acknowledging and embracing their unique strengths, areas of growth and needs.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Statement

La Scuola is a community where diverse points of view and experiences are honored and serve to create global citizens who are learners, creators, and innovators. Diverse points of view are fundamental in shaping a global point of view. By emphasizing inclusion and equity, our aim is to foster a community from the multiple voices that make up our students, staff, families and friends. By celebrating diversity, our students become keenly aware of the world around them, their place in it, and the wisdom of honoring the experiences of others.

Our Aim

At La Scuola, an International Baccalaureate school inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, the learner is central to our culture. We recognize each student as a unique individual and we design learning and teaching that recognizes both their specific strengths and growth areas. We have established programs to meet the needs of varied learners, including a stimulating, flexible, and accessible classroom setup that

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accommodates diverse learning styles and needs. Our primary focus is ensuring that all students can access the curriculum according to their individual strengths and needs, to the best of our ability. Our aim is to achieve the most favorable learning outcomes for every student.

Legal Requirements

La Scuola International School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, sliding scale tuition, and other school-administered programs. The school also does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities.

La Scuola is happy to work with parents to provide the best possible support for our children, however, certain special needs may be beyond the skill set of our faculty. If, after assessment and careful consideration by parents, teachers, Division Director and the Head of School, it is established that a child has special needs outside the remit of the teachers' responsibilities, La Scuola will work with the parents to make the best plan for the child. This could include a classroom aide (at parents' expense) or the decision to withdraw the child from the school.

All children living in California are entitled to free special education psychoeducational evaluation services and, if applicable, an IEP meeting within their unified school district. If a family chooses not to pay for private evaluations, they can apply for screening and support from their school districts, including San Francisco and other counties in California. This support could lead to the creation of an IEP.

Admissions Procedure

The school and the Student Success Group (SSG) aim to support student needs. During the admissions process, the school employs various informal and formal assessment methods to evaluate whether they can adequately support identified students' needs.

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These methods may include parent interviews, classroom visits, academic screenings, and comprehensive assessments. This process helps gauge the level of support required and determine if the school can provide appropriate accommodations.

If in the admissions process students' needs are already identified, support provided can already be in tier 1, tier 2 or tier 3, depending on the students' academic history and their specific needs. We highly value transparency and partnership with families from the very beginning. By working together, we can ensure that each student receives the appropriate support and resources they need to succeed.

Student Need Identification Process

Observed Needs

As a preschool-8th grade educational program, families may enroll their children at La Scuola for 12 years. During this time, as children move through development, barriers to learning may be observed by the family, the school or the family's pediatrician. When this happens, the school may recommend that the family gain more information from specialists who will complete an evaluation and communicate findings which may include recommendations to best support learning differences in a school setting.

Presented Needs

Different from the above, for a family that enrolls in the elementary or middle school program and their student has already identified needs, the family will share with the school completed evaluation and findings which may include recommendations to best support learning differences in a school setting.

Student Success Group

La Scuola's elementary and middle school programs have a Student Success Group (referred to as SSG hereon) which is composed of a Counselor, Special Education Specialists (English, Spanish and Italian speakers), Deans of Student Life, Wellness Director and Division Heads. Members in the SSG meet weekly and collaborate with a

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network of educational professionals (ie. psychologists, family therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists), consultants and the Unified School District representatives when applicable.

The Student Success Group (SSG) collaborates closely with our faculty to provide support for students in academics, behavior, and social and emotional development. We offer a wide range of services, encompassing observations and consultations with faculty and families, as well as individualized instruction and group sessions designed to cater to the unique learning requirements of our students.

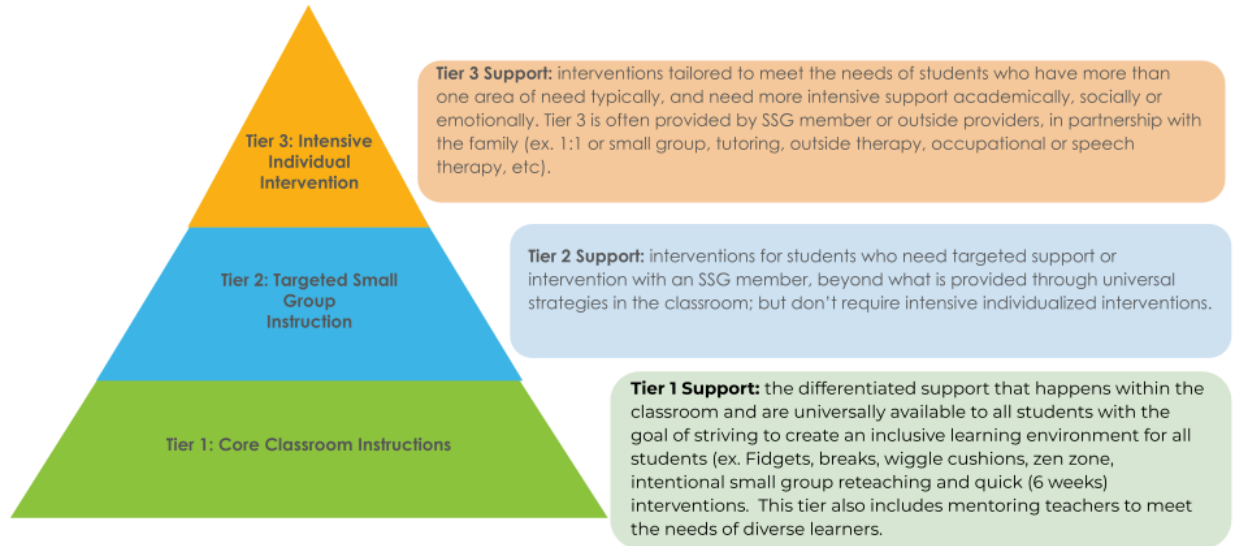
Preschool Learning Support

In the Preschool program, student support is individualized and advised by the Director and the Pedagogista in collaboration with the classroom teachers and consulting educational professionals (ie. psychologist, family therapist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist). The School-Family partnership is highly valued and therefore timely, caring and honest communication with families is a priority at La Scuola.

K-8 Learning Support Delivery Model

Our approach to providing learning support is modeled after the three-tiered Response to Intervention framework. Students with identified learning differences will need one of three levels of support: Tier 1 (no direct interventions), Tier 2 (short-term, targeted interventions), or Tier 3 (more intensive, moderate interventions).

Student Support Services



Tier 1

The differentiated support provided within the classroom is universally designed to be accessible to all students, with the objective of creating an inclusive learning environment. This approach is influenced by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of relationships, community, and valuing each child's unique perspective. By integrating these principles, we aim to create a learning setting where all children feel accepted, respected and able to participate actively. Various tools and strategies, such as fidgets, breaks, wiggle cushions, zen zones, etc., are employed to cater to the diverse needs of learners. Additionally, this tier includes mentoring teachers to equip them with the necessary skills to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Tier 2

In tier 2, we implement interventions for students who need targeted support or intervention with an SSG member, beyond what is provided through universal strategies in the classroom; but don't require intensive individualized interventions.

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Typically, the student works alongside their classmates in a regular classroom setting but may require limited support in certain areas from a SSG member. The student's teacher(s) may also consult with a learning support professional to adapt instructional practices to meet the student's needs. In this level of support, a SSG member acts as the reference point for guiding these in-class adaptations.

This level of support is provided to students who are working on the same instructional objectives and curriculum content as their peers, however require adaptations in the way the material is presented or the way they demonstrate their learning.

These adaptations may include accommodations such as:

- Changes in the amount and pace of the curriculum
- Different methods of presentation
- Explicit instruction or practice of certain skills in small groups or individually for a short period of time
- Assessments tailored to individual needs

The student will receive support as outlined in a Student Success Plan. This plan is developed and implemented by the SSG members, in conjunction with the relevant teacher(s), parent(s), and external professionals if required, such as those from a unified school district or a private provider. Sometimes, the SSG member might work with the teacher(s) and families on a consultative basis, without specifying the goals in a Student Success Plan. The Student Success Plan Tier 2 is the La Scuola equivalent of a 504 Plan. ¹

Tier 3

This level of support is provided to students who require significant modifications to the curriculum's content and/or instructional practices. Under the guidance of a SSG member, these modifications are vital to ensure the students can effectively engage with the curriculum. These modifications are documented in a Student Success Plan. The student with Tier 3 learning support is assigned a SSG member who serves as point of reference. The Student Success Plan is created and coordinated by the SSG member in

¹ [504 Plan definition as reference](#)

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consultation with the respective teacher(s), parent(s), and relevant external consultants, if needed.

The Student Success Plan Tier 3 is the La Scuola equivalent of an Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

In determining the level of support needed for the student, the SSG will take into account the following factors:

- The student has most likely undergone assessment and diagnosis for an exceptionality
- The student would qualify for learning support services in the public school system
- The student requires individual attention and extensive support
- The student needs direct and/or specialized instruction
- The student may struggle to follow the designed curriculum
- The student needs significant modifications to meet standards and use materials
- The student requires instruction in areas that typical students learn incidentally
- The student needs further instruction in certain areas beyond what is covered in the regular curriculum, such as social skills and life skills training
- The student may require the services of specialists outside of school, such as occupational therapy or speech-language pathology
- Specialized materials and/or equipment may be required for certain tasks

Student Observations

La Scuola's Reggio Emilia inspired approach to teaching and learning, across all grades, prioritizes observation and dialogue - and documentation of both. There are occasions when there may be behaviors or communication by a student that activate closer observations and conversations between teacher, SSG members and the family.

In this example, these students do not currently meet the criteria for Tier 2 or Tier 3 of support, but there is evidence suggesting that they may have an educational need that is not yet apparent. Educators who are familiar with the student suspect that they may face learning difficulties as they progress through higher grade levels and

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encounter more challenging educational tasks. If the presenting evidence and/or behavior become clearer, the school and family will meet again to discuss further steps to learn more.

Language Support

La Scuola ensures language support through differentiated instruction and individualized plans to help students access the curriculum and succeed academically. The Student Support Group (SSG) plays a key role by collaborating with language educators to create and review Student Success Plans for students facing language barriers, particularly those entering above grade 2. These plans, developed with family input, set goals and outline necessary supports for both school and home, aiming for social and academic integration. Depending on age, students receive varying levels of immersion or targeted language instruction (ie. Italian, English, Spanish), with progress and strategies continuously assessed by teachers and the SSG. For more detailed information on Language Support at La Scuola, please refer to the **Language Policy**.

Additional Services and External Assessments

The SSG offers limited educational evaluations based on needs. In response to a teacher's or parent's request, a member of the SSG can monitor the student and perform targeted assessments of specific curricular areas (literacy development, phonological awareness, mathematical reasoning, etc) and perform some short term interventions to measure progress and the learners response to intervention. Periodically, La Scuola may engage external experts, such as Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Pathologist, to conduct observations and screenings in early years and lower elementary students to provide further insights and recommendations for individual student support and overall classroom strategies.

At times, schools may request that a family pursue outside educational evaluations to gain deeper insights into a student's unique learning requirements and determine the most appropriate support strategies. External assessments involve assessments conducted by individuals outside of the school. The SSG may recommend such

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assessments, and the costs will be covered by the families. In addition to recommending private professional services for assessments, La Scuola provides any family with detailed information to pursue an educational evaluation through the Unified School Districts (public system) in San Francisco and surrounding cities. The school supports the parents through the application process, if they wish so.

Recommendations for assessment by an external specialist will only be made after the school has completed an assessment of the student's needs and the SSG determines that further assessment is necessary. The SSG's recommendations for external assessments may include one or more of the following types:

- **Developmental Assessment:** Conducted by a pediatrician and assesses the student's health and developmental level in relation to children of the same age.
- **Visual and hearing (pediatrician, usually)**
- **Occupational Therapy Assessment:** Conducted by an Occupational Therapist (OT) and assesses fine and gross motor skills used in self-care, school work, and leisure activities.
- **Speech and Language Assessment:** Conducted by a Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) and assesses communication skills, including language, articulation, pragmatics, fluency, and voice.
- **Psycho-Educational Assessment:** Involves the administration of ability and achievement tests by an educational/school/clinical psychologist.
- **Psychiatric Assessment:** Conducted by a psychiatrist, preferably trained to work with children and adolescents, and assesses emotional and mental health.

We are committed to upholding the child's rights as outlined in our policy, always acting in the child's best interest. Our approach relies heavily on the partnership with families to provide the best opportunities for the child to reach their full potential.

When providing the school with necessary reports and specialist recommendations, the family advocates for the child's learning and supports the school in creating the best possible environment for the child to reach their full potential.

Accommodations and Modifications Procedures

PYP and MYP students on tiers 1, 2 and 3 are eligible to receive accommodations at different stages of their learning in order to access the curriculum and achieve greater success. Modifications are only provided to students on tier 3 and are reviewed every semester according to the SSG review cycle.

What are Accommodations?

Accommodations are changes in the way a student is expected to learn or how they are assessed. Learning goals are not altered when accommodations are implemented. Both Tier 1 and Tier 2 students are eligible to receive accommodations in their learning, assignments, and assessments. Accommodations ensure that students with learning needs can achieve the same goals as their peers with effective support along the way.

Procedure for accommodations for students

Once a student is identified for receiving targeted Learning Support, the student's SSG member point of reference, in consultation with the relevant teacher(s) and families, develops a Student Success Plan. The necessary accommodations to support student learning are included in the Student Success Plan and agreed upon by all parties. A copy of the Student Success Plan is provided to the teachers and families, and a digital copy is kept in the student's school records in Toddle. Regular communication between the SSG member and teachers ensures the effectiveness of the strategies and their impact on student learning and progress. The student's progress is reviewed annually as part of the learning support cycle.

Should Accommodations Affect Assessment?

Grading for assessments should be done in the same manner for both students who use accommodations and those who do not. The purpose of accommodations is to ensure equal and accessible participation in tasks, rather than providing an unfair advantage to the student.

Here are some examples of accommodations:

- **Instructional methods and materials** – providing copies of lesson notes, utilizing visual aids alongside verbal instructions, offering concrete materials for learning math, allowing the use of calculators, etc.
- **Assignments and assessments** – allowing the use of word processors, providing a scribe for support, offering a separate area/room for testing, providing time extensions, breaking down long assignments into smaller parts, etc.
- **Learning environment** – offering a distraction-free area, providing a different room for completing work, adjusting groupings to suit individual needs, etc.
- **Special communication systems** – using text-to-speech software to aid reading, allowing the use of laptops/typewriters, etc.
- **Time demands and scheduling** – providing time extensions, offering organizers to help with assignment deadlines, etc.
- **Granting extended time on assignments**
- **Granting extended time for exams** (up to 50% more time, determined on a case-by-case basis)
- **Language 3 Exemption** - Identified students in middle school are exempted from taking a third language course in grades 6-8 (Italian or Spanish as Language 3)

What are Modifications?

Modifications involve changes to what a student is expected to learn. These adjustments primarily focus on adapting the curriculum or course content, which may result in modifications to grade-level expectations. Modifications serve to reduce cognitive demands and enable students to produce higher-quality work within altered curriculum goals. The Student Success Group (SSG), in collaboration with the relevant teachers, determines the appropriate curriculum modifications for students with learning needs. Only students on the Tier 3 are eligible for modifications. A student's grade in a modified subject will be indicated to denote that the task and/or rubric were modified according to their Student Success Plan.

Modifications may involve one or more of the following:

- Reducing the amount of content or concepts to be taught/learned
- Altering assignments (e.g., reducing the required amount produced or concepts addressed)
- Implementing alternate assessments alongside modified rubrics
- Applying modifications in specific subjects or parts of subjects (e.g., only focusing on written aspects of language and not on the oral production)

Steps to implement a Modified Program in Middle School

- Only students enrolled in the Tier-3 of support are eligible for modifications.
- The SSG member, in consultation with the relevant teacher(s) and families, creates a learning support plan that outlines the modified subject areas, along with accommodations and goals.
- The modified goals and strategies are then communicated to the teachers who teach that specific student, and any necessary adjustments are made.

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- Regular updates are scheduled with the teacher(s) to review the progress and implementation of the strategies.
- The strategies are shared through Toddle, on the Student Files tab, to ensure accessibility for the concerned teacher(s).
- Modifications in a subject must be consistently implemented for every assignment, task, and assessment in that semester to evaluate their impact on student learning and grades. The progress is assessed annually during the learning support review cycle to validate the modified assignments and grades. If the student demonstrates satisfactory progress in that semester, the modifications may be removed in consultation with teachers, the learning support team, and families. The concerned teacher(s) and families will be notified accordingly.
- If a student receives modifications in any subject area, the grade for each assignment and assessment must indicate the modification within the gradebook comments and progress reports. This ensures clarity in the achieved grades and provides a running record of any modifications received.

Examples of Modifications:

- Adjusting an assignment so that the student is not required to complete the same level of work as their peers. This could involve asking them to explain/learn two out of four concepts or expecting shorter answers instead of lengthy and complex pieces of work.
- Offering alternative projects if a student is unable to complete a given project. They can contribute a portion of the project or work on a different project within the same concept/context.

Tuition Affordability

At La Scuola, we strive to make our school and our program as accessible as possible. La Scuola offers sliding scale tuition, which is currently used by 30% of families. For more information, please see our **Admissions Policy**.

Glossary

Student Success Group (SSG) consists of members from the Student Success Group at La Scuola.

Student Success Plan (SSP) is a document that is created by the SSG and confirmed in partnership with families, teacher(s), and involved educational professionals (when applicable). It serves as a blueprint for the student's objectives that will be focused on during the academic year.

SFUSD Resource

[San Francisco Unified School District \(SFUSD\) referral packet](#) for families enrolled in private schools. Sourced from SFUSD website: Student Support - Special Education Assessment/Evaluation web page [here](#).

Policy Revision Procedures

This document undergoes regular reviews involving educators, administrators, and other stakeholders. The date of the most recent review was March-May 2024, the participants included our PYP and MYP Coordinators, Pedagogical Leadership Team, and our teaching staff. The date of the next review will be February 2025 to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness. The policy will be submitted for board approval once a year, in the spring. However, there might be minor changes between approval times to clarify any points when needed. Additionally, parts of the Family and Student Handbook, as well as the Personnel Handbook that are pertinent to this policy, might be

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added or linked to this policy, if considered to be relevant and improve ease of reference and transparency in our processes.

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