



LA SCUOLA D'ITALIA
GUGLIELMO MARCONI

Preliminary Inclusion and Special Needs Policy

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Introduction

Inspired by IB core principles and in accordance with the fundamental concepts expressed in the school's own mission statement, La Scuola aims at granting access to high quality learning to every student.

La Scuola's bilingual program gives both students and faculty the opportunity of bringing together two different cultures, the Italian and the American. This constant cultural exchange enriches the school's environment in significant ways, and represents one of the most widely recognized hallmarks of La Scuola.

The school capitalizes on this welcoming atmosphere as teachers and staff strive to offer students learning opportunities of intellectual growth in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic context where accepting, understanding and valuing diversity are key traits in the development of the future global citizens of the world.

One of La Scuola's primary goals is to provide a safe environment where students may feel respected, accepted and integrated irrespective of their culture, learning style, socio-emotional status and/or physical abilities.

Inclusion and Special Needs: a definition

The term "special needs" is a very broad expression encompassing different and unique situations. Special needs may include: students with medical and/or physical challenges, behavioral, learning and psychological issues requiring special long-term arrangements, but also learners affected by more common concerns necessitating only temporary interventions and/or accommodations.

As stated by the International Baccalaureate Organization, "*Inclusion is a continual process of increasing learning and participation for all students, addressing learning support requirements, questioning the broader objectives of education, the nature of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment.*" (Learning diversity and inclusion in IB programs, 2010).

This embracing and supportive approach can take place only if the entire school community collaborates and fosters fundamental ideals and values such as mutual respect, support, collaboration and flexibility. La Scuola's community, with the professional support provided by qualified staff, is committed to meet the needs of all students, notwithstanding their possible special need status.

Our policy



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At La Scuola, we recognize that students have different educational and learning demands. Our goal is to help learners reach their potential by offering students different kinds of support, depending on the type and degree of their identified needs.

Our small class sizes enable faculty members to closely track the academic and social emotional progress of students across disciplines.

The School Counselor, in conjunction with two external consultants, works closely with faculty, staff, and parents to provide psychological support and individual counseling, as needed.

To promote the integration and participation of all students, La Scuola also offers a support program designed to help students and their families become full members of the school community.

A. Welcoming and supporting students with a diagnosis of special need

The School Counselor's work starts right at enrollment, when important information about a student health and emotional wellbeing (including possible medical conditions and/or diagnoses from previous schools) is initially gathered.

Depending on the kind and level of special needs, possible accommodations may be, then, confidentially discussed with relevant coordinators and teachers.

If a diagnosis is available, the School Counselor reviews it, again sharing pivotal information only with relevant coordinators and teachers, while suggesting a series of adjustments to help the student overcome his/her own difficulties.

If the situation warrants it, the School Counselor prepares a 504 plan for the student, in collaboration with the faculty and student's family.

According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973), when a student presents a learning difficulty, a psychological, or physical impairment that limits the student's performance, the school can offer accommodations and other related services to overcome the student's needs. Section 504 is part of the law that prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities and can help students with certain levels of needs to participate in the general education curriculum.

Teachers calibrate and modify the established accommodations plan during the course of the year and review the 504 status on a yearly basis.

Communication with the student's family is fundamental throughout this entire process. Faculty and family share ideas, experiment with new technologies, try different strategies to improve the child's performance and overcome further impairments and/or difficulties.



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If the school's existing support services prove inadequate or do not result in an academic performance that is satisfactory to the family and/or the school, teachers and parents meet to discuss additional educational options.

We follow the ISAAGNY guidelines for students who want to transfer to another school in the U.S. and procedures are in place to help students and families transition to a new school. Relevant teachers and coordinators write recommendation letters and provide other documentation as required.

B. General Assessment and Interventions

During each school year, the well-established process of helping students who show difficulties starts with teachers' regular assessments and observations.

In each school division, teachers meet periodically for Class Councils to discuss the progress and needs of each student in their classes, sharing ideas on how to best support students who are struggling with a particular subject area or whose performance and/or behavior is starting to become a concern.

Following the Class Council, the School Counselor develops an "Individual learning plan" for those students who are identified as needing additional support. Initial teachers' concerns are discussed in greater details by the School Counselor in conjunction with relevant coordinators, teachers and expert consultant (where applicable). If necessary, short term intervention strategies are then selected for implementation.

Teachers, therefore, continue to monitor holistically the level of the student's performance with regular class assessments in order to understand whether the selected interventions are producing satisfactory results.

Further plans of academic support consisting in the introduction of additionally scaffolded and differentiated lessons and/or additional interventions and/or accommodations may also be devised with the goal of progressively moving the student toward increased levels of learning and participation.

C. Emotional Distress and Behavioral Issues

Counseling and guidance begin in the classroom, as the teacher is the person who has first-hand knowledge of each student's weaknesses, needs, and possible discomfort.

Whenever there is a specific concern regarding the social-emotional behavior and stress level of a student, the teachers seek the intervention of the School Counselor.



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As a bilingual and bicultural school, La Scuola is particularly sensitive to the difficulties that students and their families encounter as they transition to a new school and, in the case of Italians and other foreign nationals, to a new country and a new culture.

To facilitate this transition, the school offers support designed to help students adjust to their new environment. The School Counselor provides students with a safe space where they can find support during times of emotional overload. Students are encouraged by their teachers and/or parents to visit the School Counselor's office and talk about their problems for short-term intervention and assistance.

For students suspected of having a more serious emotional issue or learning disability that impedes their learning, La Scuola relies on the collaboration of the parents to secure a formal assessment or diagnosis by outside professionals.

The School Counselor, after discussing the situation with relevant coordinators, teachers and the Head of School, may refer parents to a therapist or a reputable learning center for a comprehensive evaluation.

In specific cases, once the student has been evaluated, a 504 plan outlining the actions and accommodations needed to address the student's disability may have to be redacted.

D. Accommodations for Assessments and Exams

In-school assessment will be differentiated based on Class Councils, relevant teachers and coordinators' decisions.

If applicable, a request for accommodations may also be sent to the College Board in order to grant the student the opportunity of having adequate access to the PSAT, SAT and other important tests.

Finally, in case of students registered with the IB, the DP Coordinator may send an accommodation request to the IBO, where necessary. If granted, arrangements offered by the IBO may include one or more of the following:

- Access to modified exam papers;
- Access to additional time;
- Access to reading and writing aids;
- Access to speech and communication aids;
- Extension of deadlines or exemption from assessment.